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Thesis

THE MILITARY CAREER OF ISRAEL PUTNAM

Submitted by

Grace Williams Bacon

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1-Map copied from that in Richard Frothingham's History of the Siege of Boston.

2-Map copied from that in The Winning of Freedom by William Wood, Ralph Henry Gabriel, p.144.

Chapter I

The Early Life of Israel Putnam

Massachusetts must share with Connecticut all blame or credit for Israel Putnam, as it was in that part of Salem now known as Danvers that Israel Putnam was born on January 7, 1718, the twelfth of a family of thirteen children. Little is known of the family life, except that pioneer conditions made formal education impossible for the children. The ancestors on both sides had lived for two generations in America. Joseph Putnam, the father, seems to have been chiefly remarkable for sympathy with persons accused of witchcraft; he came into such disfavor with the authorities that he had to keep a gun and horse ready for instant flight in case of attempted arrest. Life must have been difficult for Elizabeth Porter Putnam, the mother, for she was left a widow by her husband's death in 1723, but, by 1727, she took her younger children to live in Boxford, Massachusetts, where she married Captain Thomas Perley.

Many stories have been recalled of Putnam's youth. His education was very meager, partly due to the lack of available schools in Salem and partly to his duties on the farm. Israel Putnam's son later destroyed his father's correspondence because he was ashamed of the spelling, and what little of Putnam's writing has survived seems to justify the act from a literary standpoint, though one regrets the loss of the light these letters might have reflected on Putnam's life.

All the stories go to show Israel's physical powers and courage. One tale reminds one of Washington's conquest of the unruly colt,

though in this case it was a vicious bull. "Having put on spurs, he caught the animal in an open field and leaped astride his back. There he clung, riding furiously around the pasture, and then on into a swamp until the bull was utterly subdued."[1] Luckily Putnam had better fortune than his future Commander-in-Chief!

Colonel Humphreys, in his biography, describes the first visit to a city: "The first time he went to Boston, he was insulted for his rusticity by a boy of twice his size and age; after bearing the sarcasms until his patience was worn out, he challenged, engaged, and vanquished his unmannerly antagonist to the great diversion of a crowd of spectators."[2] These stories must have been told Humphreys by the hero personally, so one might allow for the imagination of old age.

Experience was gained by Putnam on his father's farm, which he shared with his brother David. When Israel was twenty-one, in 1738, a part was set aside for him and he built a house to which came his bride, Hannah Pope. This first home became, on July 19, 1739, the birthplace of their first child, Israel,

About this time the young couple must have been discussing the advantages of moving to Connecticut, for various neighbors had gone south and had sent back glowing reports of the land. The call of the frontier promised more independence and the golden dream of prosperity, so the Salem property was sold for 1,920 pounds and the new land in Connecticut was purchased jointly with a brother-in-law, Joseph Pope. "The transaction ocurred March 15, 1739, with Governor Jonathan Belcher,of Boston, from whom the young men obtained 514½ acres, for

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.7, from Hanson, History of Danvers, Mass.

2- Humphreys, Col. David, The Life of Israel Putnam, p.18

the sum of 2,572 pounds, 10 shillings -- at the rate of five pounds an acre -- payable in bills of credit on the province of Massachusetts. They gave bond and mortgage for the payment of this amount."[1] The land purchased was situated in the township of Pomfret, about forty miles east of Hartford, since set off as the town of Brooklyn. The early years on this new soil must have been difficult, but the young couple prospered.

Soon after settling in Pomfret, Putnam's sheep were ravaged by a wolf that had taken a cave in the hillside near Putnam's farm. Each year the neighbors had suffered from this clever old beast, but, aside from killing her cubs, they had been unable to harm her. Putnam's fine flock was attacked, "In one night he had seventy fine sheep and goats killed, besides many lambs and kids wounded."[2] While this number seems large for a young farmer on a rocky soil, he apparently had cause for settling his grievances with the animal. In December, after a light snowfall, the tracks were found and traced, so the legend says, to the Connecticut river which is forty miles away. The wolf's pursuers, who must have been good walkers, followed her back to Pomfret, making a total of some eighty miles. After they had traced the animal back to her cave, the men carried the news to the town, so that most of the inhabitants collected with their dogs. Fires were lighted so as to keep the wolf at bay; smoke and sulphur fumes were tried at the mouth of the cave, but the wolf continued in her retreat. Finally, by ten P.M., Putnam proposed to his negro that the latter take a gun and torch, go into the cave and kill the wolf. Since the servant

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.10 - Records of Danvers, Mass.

2-Humphreys, Col. David, Life of Israel Putnam, p.20.

The Wolf Den

refused, Putnam undertook the adventure personally. He had a rope tied to his feet and provided himself with a birch bark torch, which he knew the wolf would fear. The neighbors pulled him out before he was ready, but on the second descent he managed to kill the wolf, and to drag her out of the cave. Of course, this exploit was long remembered in the town of Pomfret. The writer has visited the cave, which is now marked by a bronze tablet; it is now within a state park. As the cave appeared to be a likely spot for snakes, it was not investigated fully, but one could see that it was narrow, perhaps four feet high and the sides, floor and top were of solid rock. The depth was hidden by a turn in the passage. Authors have variously estimated its depth and the courage of Putnam in this instance, but the story of the killing is well substantiated in all the early lives of Putnam and in the local histories of the county. At the time, considerable prestige must have come to the young farmer.

Putnam did very well with his farming in spite of the wolf's raid. He was especially interested in planting better types of apple trees. In the ten or twelve years before he went off to the wars, he was able to get his farm running so well that it furnished a comfortable living for his wife and children. However, history does not record how hard they had to toil while he was away! When Putnam went, there were four daughters and two sons, of whom the eldest, Israel, was fifteen.

Chapter II.

The French and Indian Wars

A clash between French and English scouting parties near Fort Duquesne began the American phase of the Seven Years War, which was to give many future Continental officers training. The echo of this engagement was to reach all the colonies. Soon volunteers were sought in Connecticut for the campaign against Ticonderoga and Crown Point. This was one of four campaigns under the general direction of the commander-in-chief, General Edward Braddock. The other three were against Fort Duquesne, the French in Acadia and Fort Niagara.

The Crown Point expedition had Albany as the gathering point of the troops, and was under the command of Sir William Johnson. Israel Putnam volunteered for this Crown Point campaign and left his family in the early summer of 1755. It must have taken considerable time for the Connecticut volunteers to march across country to Albany, where they were encamped until midsummer. There were about three thousand in the provincial army, "composed chiefly of farmers who wore their ordinary clothing, and few of them had any military experience. Like most of the other volunteers the men from Connecticut had brought their own firelocks, hatchets, belts, cartridge-boxes, and blankets."[1] The provincials were reinforced by a band of Mohawk Indians under their chief, Hendrick.

On August twenty-sixth, the troops started on the forty-mile journey to the Great Carrying-Place of the Hudson. At this point, a fort, first

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.19.

named in honor of General Phineas Lyman, the Connecticut commander, was erected. This was later changed to Fort Edward in honor of the Duke of York. On August 21st, Mohawk scouts brought word to General Johnson, who was still at Albany overseeing the shipment of supplies, that large reinforcements of French were being sent to the defense of Crown Point. Johnson at once appealed to the colonies for more troops, and at a special session of the General Assembly of Connecticut, called by Governor Fitch on August 27th at Hartford, it was voted to furnish fifteen hundred volunteers in addition to those in the field. The new recruits were formed into the Third and Fourth Regiments, and Israel Putnam was selected as a second Lieutenant of the Sixth Company in the Third Regiment.[1] This commission did not reach Putnam until after the battle of Lake George, so he was a private in that engagement.

General Johnson joined his troops at the new fort and ordered the advance from the Hudson river across fourteen miles of forest to the southern shore of Lake George; he provided that five hundred men be left at Fort Lyman. Although the English at Lake George had taken little pains to build any sort of defense, news came that Baron Dieskau had reached Crown Point with thirty-five hundred men and that he planned to surprise the garrison at Fort Lyman. On September 8, Colonel Ephraim Williams, for whom the college was named, was sent out with Mohawks under Hendrick and a thousand soldiers for the relief of Fort Lyman. Putnam was one of this party.

In the meantime, Dieskau was having his troubles. From prisoners he learned that the main body of English was at Lake George, while he

1-Livingston, W. F., Israel Putnam, p.20 and Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, Vol. X, p.399.

had supposed them in Albany. Then, too, his Indian allies refused to advance toward Fort Lyman, as they had heard cannon there. Dieskau turned back toward the English at the lake, and, when he was three miles from it, he learned from a prisoner of the approach of the English. He kept his regulars in the road and ordered his Canadian and Indian allies to go forward to form an ambush in the shape of a horse-shoe. The English were caught unaware and suffered heavily. Their retreat was sudden and confused. Both Colonel Williams and Hendrick were killed, leaving Lieutenant-Colonel Nathan Whiting of Connecticut in command. The men rallied under Whiting and fought like Indians from behind trees and rocks to cover the retreat of their main body of troops. It was in this way that Israel Putnam got his baptism of fire at the age of thirty-seven.

The French attacked the main body of English troops, who had barricaded themselves behind wagons, tree trunks and bateaux. Putnam, with the Connecticut troops, was on the left of the line towards the hill, where some of the hottest fighting took place. Dieskau was wounded and taken a prisoner. Johnson had also been shot, so Lyman was in command. By five in the afternoon the enemy retreated with nearly all their officers and half their regular troops killed, while the English had lost two hundred and sixty-two men. When it was safe, Seth Pomeroy commanded a party of four hundred soldiers, of whom Putnam was probably one, for burying the dead and caring for the wounded. No interference came, as the French retired to Ticonderoga. The English did not follow up their victory.

Soon the recruits for the two new Connecticut regiments arrived,

and Putnam became a second Lieutenant. One of the new arrivals at the camp on Lake George was a New Hampshire man, Robert Rogers, who was employed by Johnson to reconnoitre the movements of the French at Crown Point. In some of these spying expeditions Israel Putnam, as well as John Stark, was chosen to accompany Rogers. The latter has left a journal of his experiences which was published in England in 1765. Throughout the autumn of 1755, the Rangers were occupied in discovering the number, occupation, and condition of the French at Ticonderoga and at the Carrying Place near that fort.

An expedition which left camp the evening of October 7th is typical of many. Rogers took forty or fifty men in five boats and landed on the east side of the lake, about twelve miles from the Carrying Place to Ticonderoga. There they lay concealed until evening, when they re-embarked, and landed on the west side of the lake nearer the French. Putnam was sent with one companion to go to the Carrying Place and to Ticonderoga to report on the enemy. They spent the night on a mountain near the lake watching the French fires.

Again, on October 14, 1755, Putnam was one of four "picked men" who accompanied Rogers to observe Ticonderoga and to obtain a prisoner from the vicinity of Crown Point. They travelled by birch canoe on Lake George, and then on foot to a mountain overlooking Crown Point. The party ambushed within sixty rods of the fort. They were discovered and an alarm was given, but they escaped to a mountain. According to Humphreys' account of the episode, Putnam rescued Rogers from a Frenchman, but Rogers does not mention this in his Journal. The party spent the night of October 20th on a mountain overlooking Ticonderoga, where, they estimated, were 2,000 men. A return to camp was made the following day.

The affair at the Ovens is a well known tale. On October 29, Rogers set out with thirty men and discovered fires on a point of land on the west side of the lake. Three spies were sent out -- Putnam, Fletcher and Durkee. Fletcher returned that evening, while the other two remained for further observation. Being unaware of the French arrangement of placing the fires in the center of the camp and the men in a circle around them, the two scouts stumbled upon sentinels and were fired upon. They were able to escape in the darkness, but Putnam stumbled into a clay-pit and Durkee, who had been shot in the thigh, fell into the same one. The former at first supposed his companion an enemy, but was prevented from using his hatchet by recognizing Durkee's voice. Later they reached a ledge, where they lay beside a large log. Putnam's stock of rum had leaked from his canteen through a bullet hole. The next morning Putnam found fourteen bullet holes in his blanket. One author observes: "His (Putnam's blanket) was of course rolled up and slung upon his back, and therefore one ball might have perforated it in as many places as stated and at the same time passed through his canteen."[1]

Putnam and Durkee were able to join the rest of the scouting party. The position had been observed by the French, so that Rogers was in danger of being surrounded on land and water. Rogers embarked with a part of his men and attacked the French canoes, which fled to land. Here Putnam and his followers waited in ambush to give them a warm reception. Only one Englishman was wounded.

1-Fellows, John, The Veil Removed, p.41

The main camp at Lake George broke up as the winter came on, but garrisons were left at Fort William Henry and at Fort Edward on the Hudson river. Putnam remained at Fort Edward as Captain. The duties of the soldiers were to strengthen and equip the forts, to improve the road between the Hudson river and the southwestern extremity of Lake George, and to go on scouting expeditions. There is no record that Rogers and Putnam were associated during the winter months; the former was stationed at Fort William Henry. It was during this winter that Putnam unsuccessfully attempted to rescue a Colonel John Dyar who was captured by Indians while journeying from Fort Edward to Saratoga. He located the spot of the capture by torn bills of the colony scattered on the ground. The value of these bills was restored to the family of Dyar by the Connecticut Assembly. One may still see the original statement of Putnam's at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford: "this may cartify that the Day after Majir Dyar was taken captive by the Indens I was down on the where (where) he was taken with a Party of men and thare saw amongst his Papors that ware torn to peses (pieces) I saw a considarabel quantyti of Prock (Proclamation) monny tor to peses and holy (wholly) mad (e) uesles (useless).

May 19, 1760. Israel Putnam."[1]

Putnam left the service on May 30, 1756, and he was rewarded by the General Assembly of Connecticut with fifty Spanish dollars, as may be seen in the Colonial Records at Hartford: "Resolved by This Assembly that there be paid out of ye Publick Treasury of this colony y Sum of Twenty Pounds Lawfull Mony to Majr. Israel Putnam as a Reward

1-Document in State Library, Hartford, Conn.

for his Extraordinary Services in ye two Last years Campaigns and ye Treasurer of this colony is hereby ordered to pay y Same accordingly."[1] This record established beyond controversy the opinion of Putnam's contemporaries in the legislature. They were not rewarding, so far as they then knew, a coward or a mere road builder. Again it might be added that Putnam had served in the legislature and undoubtedly had friends there. Unfortunately, the colonial records do not give the speeches on the measures adopted.

Putnam's stay at home was brief, as the campaign of 1756 called him back to New York state, but he did see for the first time his seventh child, Eunice. The New England troops were to be used against Crown Point and Ticonderoga, while the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Shirley, led his troops against the French forts at Lake Ontario. The Connecticut General Assembly had made Putnam captain of the Fourth Company in the First or Lyman's Regiment. This assembled at Half Moon Camp on the Hudson under the command of General John Winslow and moved to Stillwater, thence to Saratoga, Upper Falls and Fort Edward. Nearly half of the army was left here under General Phineas Lyman, while the rest, under Winslow, advanced fourteen miles to Fort William Henry, which was to be used as a base of attack against the French forts. Putnam was apparently left with Lyman.

Sentinels had been mysteriously disappearing from night duty at one of the outposts of Fort Edward, apparently killed by surprise attacks by the Indians. Men no longer would volunteer for this duty, so that the draft was about to be used. At this time, Putnam offered his services,

1-Connecticut Archives, Colonial War, 1675-1775, V. VII: 221

although as a commissioned officer, he was exempt. About midnight a slight noise attracted his attention and he fired his gun in the direction of the sound. Luck was with him, for he had hit an Indian disguised in a bearskin, who had been killing the sentinels.

Putnam was occupied in leading out parties to spy upon Ticonderoga and its vicinity during this campaign of 1756. The French, now under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm, had strengthened their numbers and their forts, but the English failed to take the aggressive movement which had been expected.

A company of English had been plundered at Half-Way Brook on the road from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry. When news of this reached the English garrison, a hundred volunteers under Rogers and Putnam were sent out onto Lake George with two wall-pieces and two blunderbusses; they were ordered to land and interrupt the enemy at the Narrows. An ambush was prepared on the banks of Wood Creek. While many French were killed and several boats sunk, the remainder escaped into South Bay out of gunshot. These carried the news and the French prepared to ambush the rangers on their way back to Fort Edward. The French met them on the Lake with three hundred men, but the English wall-pieces and blunderbusses made it possible to cause the retreat of the French. Only one Englishman was killed and two were wounded.

In the late summer of 1756, Shirley was replaced by the Scotchman, Loudon. When, in August, news came that Montcalm had captured the English garrison at Lake Ontario and razed the forts, Loudon ordered Winslow to give up the proposed attack on Fort Ticonderoga. Putnam

was mentioned by Winslow in a report to Loudon as a man to be trusted.[1] Putnam's duties consisted in spying expeditions to the neighborhood of Ticonderoga and in patrolling the woods about Forts Edward and William Henry. During this winter, his powder horn was decorated by a John Bush, who was stationed at Fort William Henry. The horn has a plan of the route between Albany and Lake George and the following verse:

"When bows and weighty spears were used in Fight
Twere nervous limbs Declrd (declared) a man of might
But now Gun-powder scorns such strength to own
And Heroes not by Limbs but souls are shown."

It is probable that Putnam went back to Brooklyn for a few weeks during the winter, but he was again stationed at Fort Edward in the spring of 1757. Lord Loudon had concentrated the English forces against Louisburg, but, as a concession to the New England colonies, he left some provincials and regulars to garrison Forts Edward and William Henry.

Much of this campaign was recorded in the Journal of Rufus Putnam, a relative of Israel Putnam's, who was stationed at Fort Edward as a member of Frye's Massachusetts Regiment. Early in July, 1757, ocurred a rather successful engagement between Putnam, who had about five hundred and sixty men and the enemy. This took place at South Bay, in Lake Champlain, where a stone parapet thirty feet long was built near the entrance of the bay. This breastwork was on a

1-Livingston, W. F., Israel Putnam, p.51

bank about twelve feet above the water, and was concealed with pine trees. By the time it was finished, the provisions gave out and sickness forced fifteen men to return to the fort. Finally, however, the desired action came, for at about ten o'clock one evening a sentinel reported a large number of enemy canoes approaching. The English waited until the canoes were immediately in front of the barricade before they opened fire. In the meantime, small forces of English had been stationed on the shore above and below the parapet to prevent the French from landing. The action took place in the moonlight, but by dawn Putnam learned that a large force of French had landed and planned to surround him, so he ordered a retreat. It was necessary to leave behind three wounded men who were taken by the French. The enemy scouting party, which was under the famous Marin, was reputed to have lost one-half its number. While making his way back to the fort, Putnam came upon a party of English, but recognition of his voice prevented their firing upon him. Reinforcements were sent to the breastwork under the command of General Lyman and they reported that one of the three wounded men who had been left by Putnam had been barbecued, while the others were carried off by the French.

Shortly after this engagement a party of English had been detailed to cut wood and had been surrounded by the French. Humphreys described how Putnam heard of the fighting and, in spite of orders from General Lyman to retire within the fort, led his men to the rescue of the English. Apparently his success caused his disobedience to be overlooked, although Fellows stated that it was most unlikely that Lyman should have ordered him to seek protection in the fort at such a time.

In the latter part of July, Putnam and his scouts reported that the French were gathered in numbers on an island in Northwest Bay. The French under Montcalm were preparing to take advantage of Lord Loudon's absence at Louisburg to attack the English, hoping to capture both Forts William Henry and Edward and to plunder the country as far south as Albany. Putnam reported the preparations of the enemy, which Webb, his commanding officer, ordered him to keep secret. Webb left Fort William Henry for Fort Edward on July 29, 1757 under an escort commanded by Putnam. Colonel Munro was left in charge at Fort William Henry where there was a garrison of twelve hundred men. On August 2d, Webb sent a reinforcement of one thousand men; Putnam was kept at Fort Edward. Defenses at the latter fort were strengthened. On August 3d, the sound of cannon was heard in the direction of Fort William Henry, which was fourteen miles away. The next day came two urgent appeals from Colonel Munro for reinforcements. On August 6, Sir William Johnson came from Albany to Fort Edward with militia and Indians, and he led a relief party out, but Webb recalled it. Later it was discovered that the French on hearing of this party prepared to retreat, but remained for victory when news of the recall came. By Tuesday, August 9th, Rufus Putnam wrote in his Journal, "Last night we saw the signals that were flung up for distress at Fort William Henry. The Post also said that they had split most of their Cannon, and that they must be obliged to give up the Fort, except they had relief from this Fort. This express arrived in about ten o'clock (in the morning) and before he came in, the Cannon ceased but we know not the meaning of it."[1] Of course, Munro had surrendered. Tragic

1- Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.69 - Diary of Rufus Putnam.

as was this defense, it was to be followed by one of the most horrible events of the war. The French had promised the garrison safe conduct back to Fort Edward, but they were unable to control the Indian allies, who fell upon the defenseless English as they marched out of Fort William Henry and slaughtered them. After destroying the fort, the French returned north, instead of attacking Fort Edward. Putnam was engaged in scouting their movements and was one of the first to view the horrible scene which had been left at the ruined Fort William Henry.

On one of the expeditions in the autumn of 1757, Lord Howe accompanied the party and became acquainted with Putnam, who thus had first hand contact with a leader whom he was to oppose in the Revolutionary War. Lord Loudon returned to Fort Edward from his unsuccessful Louisburg expedition on November 7th, and most of the provincial soldiers were ordered home for the winter. Putnam and the Rangers stayed on, being quartered near Fort Edward in huts on an island in the Hudson river. It was during this winter of 1757-1758 that Putnam aided materially in extinguishing the fire that threatened the magazine of Fort Edward. The barracks were burning and the flames were igniting the wood of the magazine which contained three hundred barrels of powder. Soldiers brought water from the river and Putnam mounted a ladder to throw it onto the blaze. Humphreys described how his mittens burned so that he had to be furnished a second pair, but he didn't tell how the ladder escaped a similar fate: When the barracks fell in, Putnam continued to pour water upon the magazine, for

the outside planks were already burned and only one thickness of timber lay between the powder and the fire. After an hour and a half, the fire was extinguished, but Putnam's body was blistered and the skin of his hands came off with his mittens. He was incapacitated for a month.

In the Spring of 1758, he had a few weeks at home, and he learned that the General Assembly of Connecticut had promoted him to the rank of Major.

In preparation for the new campaign, General James Abercrombie was placed in charge of the Ticonderoga and Crown Point expedition; Major-General Jeffrey Amherst was assigned to the Louisburg Expedition; and Brigadier-General John Forbes was to take Fort Duquesne. Most of the Connecticut forces, including Putnam, were engaged in the Crown Point expedition. On July 5th, Abercrombie's entire force was launched in bateaux on Lake George to go against Fort Ticonderoga. The expedition failed, partly because of the Commander's impatience in beginning the assault on the fort before cannon and munitions were brought up, and partly because the French had felled quantities of trees near the fort and of these had built a wooden wall to protect the approach. The English assaults resulted in utter failure and the sacrifice of two thousand dead. During the approach to the fort, a detachment of French met a body of English in the forest, and in this preliminary engagement Brigadier-General Lord Howe was killed. Putnam was also in this engagement and was able to help the wounded. It was said that Rogers did not trouble to bring in the wounded French but despatched them in an easier way, though this story doesn't seem to be well substantiated. After the retreat to the site of Fort William Henry began, Putnam was

among those assigned to cover the rear, keeping up a fire from behind trees and rocks.

A popular story of Putnam's adventures belongs to this period. While on a scouting expedition, Putnam with five men and a boat, was near what is now Northumberland, N.Y., when he found that a large party of Indians was pursuing him. One of the Englishmen, who was away from the others, was abandoned, while the rest took to the boat and went over the rapids. The Indians were said to have marveled greatly at this escape, as these rapids had never been navigated before. The fate of the man left stranded on the shore is not recorded. Such anecdotes have their source in Humphreys' life of Putnam. Since the only contemporary record was Rogers' Journal which only mentions Putnam in a casual way, except for the description of his capture by the Indians, Humphreys must have got them directly from Putnam.

Late in July, Putnam was sent out with a party under Rogers to cut off a group of French who were known to be near Fort Edward. The English were proceeding single file through the bushes, when they were surprised by a French ambuscade. Putnam, in the lead, was captured by the Indians and tied to a tree, where he was forced to remain in the midst of a fierce battle. One Indian amused himself by throwing a tomahawk as near his head as possible without hitting him. A Frenchman, whose gun missed fire, struck Putnam on the jaw. Later his arms were pinioned behind him, and he was forced to walk barefoot through the briars, carrying packs belonging to the wounded. At evening, he was taken into the forest, tied to a tree and surrounded by wood which was

set on fire. This was put out by a shower and then re-lighted. At the last moment, he was saved by the French officer Molang (Murin). That evening his arms and legs were stretched apart and tied to trees, while saplings were put across his body, and the Indians slept upon them, lest their prisoner try to escape. The next day the Indian who had captured Putnam treated him better, giving him soft food because of his sore jaw, and allowing him to wear moccasins. He was relieved of his pack also, so that he managed to reach Ticonderoga. Upon his arrival there, Putnam was questioned by Montcalm.

Within a week of his capture, news reached Fort Edward, according to Captain David Holmes' Orderly Book: "August 14. By a flag of truce, informed that Major Putnam, Lieutenant Tracy and three others, were carried without wounds into Fort Caroline (Ticonderoga)." Not until his exchange, did the English hear of the brutal treatment given Putnam. The only source of information about this is Humphreys' account which was gained from Putnam. It is impossible to judge whether the Indians really intended to burn Putnam or to scare him. Under the custody of a French officer, Putnam was sent to Montreal, where he met another prisoner, Colonel Peter Schuyler of New Jersey, who had a house for himself and who got Putnam suitable clothes and invited him to stay at his own house. Putnam was soon transferred to Quebec.

Toward the end of 1758 the English got good news; Lord Amherst had been successful in securing the fall of Louisburg, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bradstreet captured Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario. As a result of these victories, an exchange of prisoners was arranged. Schuyler, who was exchanged for the commander of Fort Frontenac, was put in charge

of the arrangements. He succeeded in getting Putnam exchanged by writing, "There is an old man here who is a Provincial Major, and wishes to be at home with his wife and children; he can do no good here or anywhere else; I believe your Excellency had better keep some of the young men, who have no wife or children to care for, and let the old fellow go home with me."[1] Putnam was just forty at the time. On the way back, Putnam was given charge of a widow and her five children. This widow, who had been befriended by Schuyler, had lost her husband in an Indian massacre and had been carried captive to Canada. Putnam took great pains to make her journey back to the English settlements as comfortable as possible.

By 1759, Putnam was made Lieutenant-Colonel in the Fourth Regiment (Col. Fitch's). Lord Jeffrey Amherst was given charge of another expedition against Ticonderoga and Crown Point. This was a part of the plan by which Wolfe was to advance up the St.Lawrence river to Quebec; Amherst was to capture Ticonderoga and Crown Point and then proceed up the Richelieu to the St.Lawrence river to join Wolfe before Quebec.

Amherst's troops were employed in building fortified posts, in felling trees along the road to Fort Edward and in constructing bateaux. A fort was built on a hill which overlooked the site of Fort William Henry. Amherst had profited from Abercrombie's mistakes; he had gained thorough information from scouts and he had waited for cannon and munitions before attempting an attack.

On July 21, 1759, the whole force embarked for Ticonderoga. There were about 11,000 English -- half of them regulars and the rest provincials. The French were under the command of Chevalier de Bourlamaque,

1-Humphreys, Col. David, Life of Putnam, p.66.

who controlled between two and three thousand men. While the English were making preparations for the attack, the French quietly retreated, leaving several hundred men to keep up a brisk fire with cannon. The remainder of the garrison abandoned the fort soon after this, but not before attaching a slow match to the magazine, which caused an explosion that blew up one bastion and set fire to the barracks. The English troops were set to work restoring the damage done and in rebuilding Crown Point, which the French had abandoned. Putnam was engaged in superintending parties which gathered timber for the fortifications at Crown Point. The year 1759 had been a good one for the English, as Fort Niagara had been captured by Sir William Johnson, and Quebec had been captured by Wolfe. There were now only two important French posts left in America: Montreal and Isle-aux-Noix.

The year 1760 opened most propitiously for the English, as the colonies were much more willing to raise their levies of troops when victory was assured. The plan for the year was centered about the capture of Montreal. There were to be three expeditions from the east, south and west: General Amherst as Commander-in-Chief of all the English troops in America was to lead the main army down the St.Lawrence from Lake Ontario; General James Murray, who had succeeded Wolfe, was to advance up the St.Lawrence; Brigadier-General Haviland was to take the Lake Champlain route to reach Montreal. Once again the Connecticut troops were a part of the forces under Amherst, so Putnam came to Albany to join his men. From Albany they went to Schenectady, up the Mohawk river to Fort Stanwix, on the Great Carrying Place, across Oneida Lake and down the Onondaga river to Oswego. It took two months before the

last troops had reached Lake Ontario, for the army numbered more than eleven thousand men. By August 7, the first division, led by Colonel Haldimand, set forth for Montreal. The second followed on August 9 under Lord Amherst, consisting of the Royal Artillery, regulars and some Indians. The third division under General Thomas Gage included eight battalions of provincials from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Putnam was in this third division, and he became known to Gage at this time.

The army was afloat on Lake Ontario in bateaux and whale boats, while the armed boats designed to protect them were left behind, confused by the channels of the Thousand Islands. It was thus a critical moment when a French armed vessel was sighted. According to Almon's Remembrancer for 1775, it was at this time that Putnam showed considerable ingenuity. He begged of Amherst a beetle, wedges, a boat and a few men. At nightfall, he went to the stern of the French vessel, and drove the wedged behind the rudder. The next morning the ship was adrift and was blown ashore to be easily taken by the English. The second French ship, the Ottawa, was also taken by the English, thus making possible the capture of Fort Lévis, which stood on Isle Royale in the middle of the St.Lawrence river. Humphreys tells of how Putnam proposed and carried out a novel method of attack. The boats were covered with boards which were musket proof and which protected the men. Next, a plank about twenty feet long was attached to each boat so that it might be raised or lowered by ropes. This was to be put down to serve as a bridge by which the men might enter the fort. It is claimed by Putnam's admirers that while this design wasn't used, it hastened the surrender of the fort by frightening the enemy. Other writers feel

that the plank wasn't long enough to reach to the top of the fort and that the plan was impracticable.[1] However, the bombardment of Fort Lévis seems to have been the chief cause of its surrender.

It took a week for the army to reach Montreal after the surrender of Fort Lévis. The river was difficult to navigate because of the rapids; many boats were dashed to pieces on the rocks and eighty-four men were drowned. But on September 5th news came from Generals Murray and Haviland announcing their successful approach to Montreal. The end of French power in America was very close, for three armies were approaching the last great stronghold. On September 6, the army landed at La Chine, which is on the southwest end of the island of Montreal. The force of provincials which included Putnam was left to guard the boats. Thus, Putnam, after coming this long and difficult journey, missed the final action at Montreal only nine miles away. Upon finding that the British with seventeen thousand troops planned to bombard the city, the French began to negotiate for peace, which was settled upon September 8, 1759. By the terms of this, all French troops in Canada were to lay down their arms: "Half the continent changed hands at the scratch of a pen."

While in Canada, Putnam seems to have resumed friendly relations with the Indian who had previously been his captor. Very shortly after the surrender of Montreal, Putnam was ordered back to Fort William Augustus, where Connecticut troops were kept at work on this fort until late in October. During the winter months the provincials were sent home.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp.111-112 - Humphreys, Life of Putnam

The campaign of 1761 was most uneventful. Connecticut troops were stationed at Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point to do repair work. Putnam was transferred to be Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Regiment because of the death of Nathan Payson. The details of Putnam's activities in 1761 are unknown.

So far as the continent of North America was concerned, the war was over. But there was still trouble in Cuba, for Spain had agreed to help France against England. The English program was to capture the Spanish property of Havana. In this engagement the fleet was commanded by Admiral Sir George Pocock and the army, by Admiral the Earle of Albemarle. Connecticut was called upon to raise twenty-three hundred men to be formed into two regiments. They were under Major-General Phineas Lyman, and Israel Putnam was Lieutenant-Colonel of the First Regiment. The soldiers embarked for the West Indies at New York City. When they neared the coast of Cuba, a hurricane drove the transport on which were Putnam and five hundred of his men onto the rocks. Putnam directed the building of rafts which transported the men to the shore, where they were organized by him into a fortified camp from which they were rescued after several days.

The reinforcements were especially welcome in Cuba because the besieging army was suffering from the tropical fevers. Ten days after the arrival of the provincials a successful attack was made upon Morro Castle and by August 13, 1762 the Spanish surrendered the city of Havana. The amount of prize money was small, but it gave Putnam added prestige among his neighbors in Brooklyn, Connecticut. For two months the provincials were kept at work repairing damages to Havana, and on

October 21 they cheerfully embarked for home.

Toward the end of his stay in Cuba, Putnam acquired a Negro servant. He found a Cuban beating a slave with a bamboo cane, and seized the cane from the master. Somehow Putnam managed to escape from a mob of angry Cubans. The negro followed him to the ship and begged to be taken away. The cane, it is said, remained in Putnam's possession to support him in his old age, while the negro served him long and faithfully as a servant.

The famous treaty of 1763 ended the struggle with France and Spain. Florida and other Spanish possessions east of the Mississippi were given to England in exchange for Cuba.

To summarize Putnam's activities in the French and Indian Wars, he was actively engaged from 1755 to 1762 with but a few weeks at a time at home. Most of his work consisted of scouting, supervising the construction of forts and roads, and fighting in the engagement against Dieskau and the unsuccessful storming of Ticonderoga. He was also captured and taken a prisoner to Canada. While not present at the fall of Montreal, he took part in that engagement. Apparently his services were recognized as valuable by the General Assembly of Connecticut, for he rose from a private to a Lieutenant-Colonel, second in command of a regiment. Yankee ingenuity and an aptitude for the forest methods of fighting characterized him. The ability to make friendships is apparent, though how close he came to Howe and Gage is another question. On the whole, Putnam served a thorough military apprenticeship under English and provincial leadership. The wars must have served as a liberal education to this farmer of Brooklyn. Because of his travels and experiences he would naturally be interested in events apart from his farm and village.

Chapter III

Bradstreet's Expedition against Pontiac

Pontiac had succeeded in uniting most of the Indian tribes between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi river against the English. His plan was to make a simultaneous attack upon the forts in the month of May, 1763. A few Indians were to gain entrance to the forts and then unite with those outside to massacre the garrisons. Many of the forts fell, but the commander at Detroit had been warned by an Indian girl and had resisted the attacks. It was in this emergency that General Thomas Gage, Commander-in-Chief in America, appealed to the colonists for help in 1764.

Again the Connecticut legislature made Putnam Lieutenant-Colonel of the forces to be raised in that colony. One of the expeditions was led by Colonel Henry Boquet into the Ohio Valley. The other was under Colonel John Bradstreet and was to bring relief to Major Gladwyn at Detroit. Putnam and the Connecticut troops were assigned to the latter expedition, and they assembled at Albany to march across New York and up Lakes Ontario and Erie. At Fort Ontario Bradstreet's twelve hundred men were increased by six hundred Indians under Sir William Johnson. Under the latter was Putnam's captor and friend, the Indian who had aided him in his Canadian captivity. Two vessels, seventy-five whaleboats, and a number of canoes were used for the transportation of the men upon Lake Ontario. They found a large number of Indians encamped about Fort Niagara, and a month was used up in conferences and treaty making. On July 17, 1764, Putnam, with four hundred and fifty provincials was despatched to construct a fort. This was erected where the Niagara empties into

Lake Erie and was under the direction of Lieutenant Montresor, an engineer. After three weeks spent in building Fort Erie, the provincials were joined by the main body of troops. In August, the army embarked upon Lake Erie, landing upon the southern shore, where they were met by Indian ambassadors. After a preliminary treaty was concluded, the soldiers proceeded to Fort Detroit, after having lost time through Bradstreet's too great confidence in the Indians. Putnam's men were engaged in felling trees and preparing the timber for quarters to hold Bradstreet's army on an island which is now one of the parks of the city of Detroit -- then called Isle-au-Cochon.

Upon a report that the Indians had assembled at Sandusky to oppose the British landing, Bradstreet organized an expedition against that spot. Later it was said that the Indians had come to arrange a peace treaty, but they failed to keep their agreement and Putnam's provincials were set busy building a fort at Sandusky.

Since the fall was far advanced and it would be extremely difficult to attack the Indians on the plains of the Scioto, in accordance with the orders of Gage, Bradstreet determined to get his army home. A stormy night on Lake Erie wrecked many boats and made it necessary for a portion of the army to return to Fort Niagara on foot. Putnam continued with the main army in the boats and encountered many storms on this two weeks' voyage. After a short rest at Fort Niagara, the men re-embarked on Lake Ontario and continued their hard trip back to the Hudson river and home. This proved to be the last military expedition in which Putnam was to be engaged until the Revolution.

Chapter IV

A Period of Peace

1765-1775

On April 6, 1765, Putnam lost his first wife, Hannah, who died leaving seven of their ten children living. By June 3, 1767, the family cares had induced Putnam to marry again, this time to Mrs. Deborah Lothrop Gardiner, who was making her third venture into matrimony. Her first husband, Rev. Ephraim Avery, had been pastor of Brooklyn parish, while her second husband was John Gardiner, fifth proprietor of Gardiner's Island. By the latter she had a daughter and son, who were nine and seven years old at the time of her third marriage. By this time Israel Putnam Jr. was twenty-seven years old and married, so he took the old homestead and set up housekeeping, while his father moved to the Avery estate on Brooklyn Green. They had found the duty of entertaining all of Putnam's friends quite arduous, so the new home was turned into an inn, called the General Wolfe Tavern. The sign which hung in front of this old tavern is still preserved by the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford. One writer comments: "A Virginian Jefferson would submit to such an invasion though it made him bankrupt; a Yankee Putnam could continue to turn it into profit or at least save himself from ruin."[1] The following description makes life at the General Wolfe Tavern vivid: "It is easy to picture to ourselves Israel Putnam as the host of an old-time inn. Large and stout in figure, with round, good-natured face and hospitable manner, he was the typical landlord, heartily welcoming his guests and entertaining them with tales of his varied experiences, his numerous adventures on land and water, and hairbreadth escapes from fire and sword.

1-Larned, Ellen D., History of Windham County, Connecticut, Volume II, p.6

The Church
Putnam Helped
to Build

This tavern, with its distinguished host and equally cordial hostess, became one of the best known gathering-places in Eastern Connecticut and was associated with many an interesting incident in Revolutionary days. Around the large hearthstone were discussed the vital questions of the colonial crisis that stirred the soul of every ardent patriot. Putnam's tavern was a centre, also, for news of local interest; because here, as at other inns in the olden days, were posted notices of town meetings, of elections, of new laws, and notices of administration, as well as bills of sales, of auctions, and records of transfers. The inn was, indeed, an 'original business exchange', and the genial Putnam found much social enjoyment in the intercourse with the neighbours and townspeople who flocked to the tavern for information in regard to local affairs as well as the matters of wider importance. The arrival and departure of the coaches loaded with travellers held a high place among the chief events in the village."[1]

Soon after the death of his first wife, Putnam interested himself in the affairs of the local Congregational church. He became a member of the church on May 19, 1765, and apparently became a close friend of the pastor, Rev. Josiah Whitney.

An interesting addition to Brooklyn came in the person of Colonel Godfrey Malbone, an Oxford graduate, a retired merchant and an ardent loyalist. Putnam's experiences evidently attracted Malbone to him, though they disagreed on many issues of the time, such as the revival of the Navigation Laws, the Molasses Act and the Stamp Act. Then, too, there was the difference which arose over religion. The Congregational

1-Livingston, W.F. Israel Putnam, p.157.

church needed rebuilding, but Malbone opposed this, not wishing to contribute funds to that sect. So, in hopes of preventing the building project, he started the erection of a rival Episcopal church. This gave the Congregationalists added zest to build a creditable structure. The church which was erected may be seen on Brooklyn Green, just opposite the site of Putnam's tavern. Whether because of his nearness or because, as some authors insist, it was a great honor, Putnam was made the bell ringer and sexton. His salary was three pounds a year. The bell was rung for all holidays or lectures as well as at twelve o'clock and at nine at night, so the pay was not very large.

In 1763, as well as in 1765 and 1771, Putnam was chosen a selectman by the Pomfret people. He was moderator of the town meeting in 1769 and he was connected with the supervision of a new road, the re-arranging of school districts, the engaging of schoolmasters and the collecting of taxes. He was chosen to receive crows' heads when the farmers voted to pay a bounty for the killing of these pests.[1] Of such were the duties of a public spirited subject in 1765.

As a member of the Sons of Liberty organization, Putnam rode about eastern Connecticut to find out how many soldiers might be raised in case of trouble with England over the Stamp Act. He was also in correspondence with the Sons of Liberty of New York and Massachusetts. Because of some minor accident, he was prevented from joining the Connecticut men in meeting Jared Ingersoll, the stamp agent, who was on his way to Hartford to carry out his duties. This Ingersoll had been sent to England to

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.159 - Brooklyn records

protest against the bill before Parliament had voted upon it. However, since there seemed so little opposition to the Act, he had accepted the position of stamp distributor. He was forced by a group of mounted farmers to resign his office and to shout three times: "Liberty and property". Later, Putnam was able to go with a delegation of the Sons of Liberty to Governor Thomas Fitch, who was told that if he refused to give up the stamps, his house would be levelled to the ground. Friday, May 23d, was chosen by Connecticut as a day for thanksgiving on account of the repeal of the act. It was celebrated by services in the churches and by the ringing of bells, flying of flags, illuminations, and firing of cannon.

In 1772, General Phineas Lyman returned from England where he had been attempting to get a land grant for the provincial veterans of the French and Indian Wars. He told a group of the Company of Military Adventurers that the King had provided for land grants of the same size as those given the regular troops. Immediately, an exploring committee, consisting of Col. Israel Putnam, Captain Roger Enos, Thaddeus Lyman and Rufus Putnam, was appointed. Israel Putnam's relative, Rufus Putnam, came to Pomfret from whence they journeyed by horseback to Norwich, thence by sloop to New York.

A diary, which was used by W.F. Livingston and which was at the time he was making his study of Putnam in the possession of Mr. Charles Otis Thompson of Pomfret, Connecticut, pictured the trip. The following extract gives one an idea of Putnam's literary ability: "Sunday

ye 20 (of December, 1772) pas (s) ed heal gait (Hell Gate) and had all like to have been lost by reason of a bad pilot but got through wel-arrived at New York about 12 o'clock -- in ye afternone Went to hear Doctor rogos (Rev.Dr. John Rodgers, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church) preach

"Mondy ye 21 -- Capt. Laidley and Capt. Godrich Sat about riging and Loding ye vesel.

"tusday ye 22 -- it proved varey raney so that thare was but leetel to be don

"Wednesday ye 23 -- good weathor all hands at worke preparing the vesel

"thorsday 24 -- varey raney and Durtey weather but leatel Don."[1]

The party visited Haiti and Jamaica. While on the latter island, Israel Putnam was watching an encounter between a dog and the plantation manager and had the misfortune to fall into a vat of rum.

The vessel finally reached Pensacola, Florida, where Putnam met his old friend, Major John Small, whom he was later to meet at Bunker Hill. No royal orders had been received, so the party decided to fill in time while waiting for their receipt by exploring the Mississippi river. The captain of the sloop refused to take it above New Orleans, perhaps because of Spanish restrictions on navigation. The men took a bateaux and proceeded up the river. On the way they visited an Acadian settlement. They went about four hundred and fifty miles up the Mississippi to the Big Black river. Israel Putnam, Thaddeus Lyman,

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.164 - Diary of Israel Putnam

and a Choctaw Indian for guide explored the land. After observing the cypress swamps and cane breaks, they joined their companions in the boat, and returned to the sloop which had come one hundred miles to meet them. On their return to Pensacola, Florida, no royal instructions were to be found; they did secure certain rights for provincial veterans to settle on the lands which they had reconnoitred. The voyage ended at New York on August 6th. Any plans that Putnam may have made for settling in the Mississippi Valley were changed by the outbreak of the Revolution.

Chapter V

The Prelude to Bunker Hill

After the Boston Tea Party, Brooklyn Parish made Israel Putnam the chairman of its Committee of Correspondence, which also included Joseph Holland and Daniel Tyler Jr. The three prepared a spirited letter to Samuel Adams, chairman of the Committee of Correspondence of Boston, and Putnam was chosen to take the letter to Boston. At the same time he drove a flock of sheep, which was Brooklyn's gift to the suffering town. While in Boston, he was the guest of Dr. Joseph Warren, It was during this visit that Putnam saw Major Small and argued with him over the situation; his acquaintance with General Thomas Gage was also renewed. He returned home with a letter in which Boston expressed its appreciation for the food sent by Brooklyn.

In August, 1774, quite a furor was started in Connecticut because of the report that General Gage had seized powder and cannon at Quarry Hill in Charlestown and had removed it to Castle William. Rumor had it that six people had been killed in Boston, and that the town had been fired upon, while, as a matter of fact, the people had been dissuaded from violence by Joseph Warren. On receipt of the exaggerated report, Putnam alarmed the vicinity with a letter which recounted what he had heard. Only after he had gone thirty miles from home did Putnam hear that the report was false. He turned back to send the troops home. Apparently several thousand men had been set in motion by Putnam's report.[1] Silas

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.194.

Deane characterized it as "Putnam's blundering story", and it was felt to have strengthened the feeling against reconciliation with England. Putnam's own defense of his action was published as a letter in the Connecticut Gazette at New London on October 7, 1774.[1] After giving the details by which he believed the rumor had started, he concludes: "From what has been said, I believe it will sufficiently appear that I was not the inventor of this alarm, and I am told from good authority, that the people were in motion in the northward part of Massachusetts Government, even to the distance of one hundred miles from Boston who was alarmed by an Express sent thither by the same Wilcot, above mentioned, before the news reached me, which I think is enough to silence the ill-natured aspersions of every cavilling Tory against my conduct, and make them, dog-like, draw in their tails and lop their ears, and skulk into some obscure hole or kennel and hide themselves from the contempt of the world."[1]

It was on a Thursday morning, April 20, 1775, that Israel Putnam took his son Daniel to a field near the tavern to plow. As they were slowly turning up the sod that Spring morning, a messenger for Daniel Tyler, Putnam's son-in-law, dashed up and announced the battle of Lexington. Apparently the plow was not left carelessly in the furrow as legend had it, but was turned over to the son. Putnam hastily mounted and rode to Lebanon to consult with Governor Jonathan Trumbull, who ordered him to ride to Boston.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.195, The Connecticut Gazette, Oct. 7, 1774.

On his return to Brooklyn, Putnam found men gathered on the Green to get the news and to await orders, for excitement was at a high pitch. That same evening he rode to Boston and from there to Concord, reaching that place the next day, according to the date of a letter which has come down to us.[1] According to Col. William Henshaw's Orderly Book, he returned from Concord to Boston to be present at a council of war.[2] Putnam took up quarters in Cambridge, while General Artemas Ward, who commanded the Massachusetts forces, was at Roxbury. On his return to Connecticut to report to the General Assembly, Putnam was made a Brigadier-General.

It was not until June 19, 1775 that Israel Putnam was made Major-General by the Continental Congress.[3] He was unanimously chosen fourth Major-General, the other three being Artemas Ward, Charles Lee, P. Schuyler. Four days before, on June 15, Washington had been made Commander-in-Chief. It is of interest to note that the pay of a Major-General was one hundred and sixty-six dollars per month and three hundred and thirty-two dollars per month, if in a separate department. At the time, there was apparently no objection whatever to Putnam's appointment to be the fifth in rank in the American forces. It seems probable that the appointment came because of Putnam's reputation in the French and Indian Wars and on account of his activity in local and state affairs since the war.

The advertising which Putnam obtained from the raid on Hogg and Noddle's Islands was especially valuable. On May 27th a party of about two or three hundred men left Cambridge for Chelsea with orders

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.194, Letter printed in the Packet of Norwich, April 23, 1775.

2-Ibid, p.195. 3. Journal of the Continental Congress, Vol.II,p.99

from the Committee of Safety to drive the stock off these islands and to burn what property they could not take away. The water around Hogg Island, now Breed's Island, is at low tide but knee deep, and from there about the same depth to Noddle's Island, now East Boston. Some twenty men ventured to Noddle's Island, where they got several horses and cows and burned a couple of buildings. Soon a party of British marines with a schooner and sloop forced them to hide in a ditch in the marsh. Finally they killed two marines and wounded two others. The Americans retreated to Hogg Island, where, aided by the rest of their party, they drove off some three hundred sheep and other stock. The marines and boats continued to fire upon the provincials while the stock was being driven off. When the Americans reached Chelsea Neck, they sent for a party of three hundred to reinforce them. It was then that Putnam came on the scene as the commander of the reinforcements. This second party brought two four pounders, and they forced the people on the schooner to leave in small boats. The sloop was towed off by British reinforcements, but the schooner drifted ashore. It was burned by the Provincials, after they had taken what was valuable aboard her. Only four Provincials were wounded, though it was reported that twenty British were killed and fifty were wounded. Since this engagement came in the midst of inactivity, it was magnified into a battle. The news spread widely and reached the Continental Congress while that body was considering the appointment of general officers. Roger Sherman in a letter to

General David Wooster said, "His (Putnam's) successful enterprise at Noddle's Island gave him the preference in the opinion of the delegates in general, so that his appointment (on June 19,1775 as Fourth Major-General of the Continental Army) was unanimous."[1] The account of the engagement in Almon's Remembrancer for 1775 did not show Putnam as having done remarkable service.[2] He merely came after the raid on the islands was over and directed the fire on the schooner, and, after that was deserted, aided in the burning of the ship. General Ward rebuked Putnam for unnecessary provocation, feeling that peace was yet to be sought.

Putnam apparently had the capacity of impressing his associates with an idea of his own importance. His popularity was very high at this time, but we know that Governor Trumbull was displeased because Putnam was raised over the heads of his superiors in Connecticut by this act of Congress. David Wooster and Joseph Spencer both out-ranked him so far as the action of the Connecticut General Assembly went. Trumbull wrote to the Connecticut delegates at the Continental Congress telling of the feeling that this appointment caused, so the Connecticut governor was not backing Putnam in this promotion. The governor was writing to E. Dyer, Roger Sherman and Silas Deane not only on his own account, but to express the feeling of the General Assembly--"at the same time they had the highest sense of General Putnam's singular merit and services and request if it be practicable, that some method may be devised to obviate the Difficulties that are apprehended."[3]

1-Livingston,W.F., Israel Putnam,p.205 - letter of Roger Sherman

2-Almon's Remembrancer for 1775

3-Connecticut Archives, Revolutionary War, V.I,235B

Putnam's commission was given him by Washington after the battle of Bunker Hill was fought, so his only authority at that time rested on the rank of Second Brigadier-General of Connecticut forces, as made by the General Assembly of that state.

Israel Putnam, as well as his superiors, Wooster and Spencer, had been made colonels of a regiment and captains of a company. Among the recruits in Putnam's regiment was his oldest son, Israel, who served his father as an aide-de-camp. Putnam's headquarters were in Cambridge in a large house opposite Gore Hall of Harvard University — an abandoned loyalist's home. Putnam's experience in war caused Warren and Ward to consult him, and he was apparently in charge of the fortifications which were thrown up in Cambridge for the defense of the town against the British in Boston. This work also served the purpose of keeping the recruits busy and out of trouble. Both Putnam and Colonel William Prescott hoped to fortify Charlestown Heights, though this project was not favored by the Committee of Safety or the Provincial Congress.

Commander Gage made attempts to bribe Putnam to leave the American cause by holding before him the hope of becoming a Major-General in the British army. Captain John Montresor wrote in his Journal that "even Israel Putnam, of Connecticut, might have been bought to my certain knowledge for one dollar per day, or eight shillings New York currency." There is no proof that Putnam ever went to Boston to consult with Gage about terms, though the enemies of Putnam hint that he was too lenient toward the enemy. The writer has found no proof of complicity -- only insinuations.

Soon after the affair on Hogg Island, which gave Putnam such prominence, an exchange of prisoners was arranged. The Americans got back nine men who had been taken at Lexington and Concord. Putnam met his old friend, Major Moncrief, who was entertained by the American officers at the house of a Doctor Foster. Putnam felt that this exchange signified that the British recognized the right of resistance.

On two occasions, Putnam marched his troops into Charlestown. Each time he studied the ground and became increasingly interested in throwing up defenses on the high ground. He argued that it would draw the enemy out on equal terms, and that two thousand men would be enough to risk. The opposition felt that the British with their floating batteries and warships could cut off the American retreat at Charlestown Neck. Finally, news that General Gage intended to take possession of Dorchester Heights on the night of June 18th determined the Americans to occupy Charlestown Heights. The American forces at Cambridge consisted of from seven to eight thousand men, and made up about one-half of the army around Boston. General Spencer with the remainder of the Connecticut men was located at Roxbury, so that he was unable to get the publicity from small engagements.

Copied from map in Frothinghams
Siege of Boston

Chapter VI

Putnam at Bunker Hill

Had one been in Boston on June 17, 1775, he would probably have been found on one of the housetops, along with hundreds of others. Down in the Charles river near Copps Hill might have been recognized H.M.S. Lively and Falcon pouring shells over Charlestown onto Breed's Hill. On the summit of this ground was visible a hastily constructed redoubt, while to the north of this, slanting down the hill to the Mystic river, was a rail fence hastily converted into a barricade to lend confidence to the hearts of untried soldiers. Clustering about these works was an excited group of men with rifles -- hardly an army -- who were still working at the fortifications. Down at Moulton's Point at the extreme eastern tip of Charlestown Neck were the orderly rows of red uniformed British soldiers who were assisting in the unloading of supplies. Between these ominous groups, the hillside lay bare, except for the heaps of new mown grass whose sweetness was probably not noted by the boys who piled it behind the rail fence. To the fortunate watcher with a telescope, there might have been revealed an officer marching up and down the top of the redoubt to keep the men's attention from the cannon balls which were hissing overhead and embedding themselves in sundry apple trees. This was Prescott, who had charge of the building of the redoubt. Over towards the west there was considerable confusion on Bunker Hill, where groups of nervous men were gathered. The narrow neck between the Mystic and Charles rivers was being raked with shot

from a transport, endangering the reinforcements who passed over it.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, General Howe might have been seen addressing his troops.[1] Then, while the fire from Copps Hill, the ships and batteries was centered on the intrenchments, flanking parties advanced up the hill. The right column, led by General Howe, advanced against the rail fence, while the left, led by General Pigot, attempted to storm the redoubt. The British artillery became mired in clay and took its station near some brick kilns; it proved of little use in the battle. The American shots, reserved to the last, brought down many a veteran, so that the stubble was littered with red uniformed bodies. One can imagine the shout of victory from the American line when General Pigot was forced to retreat. Likewise, General Howe's attack upon the rail fence was repulsed. General Howe is said to have retired to wine and other refreshments which were served by his faithful servant.

Since the British soldiers had been injured by the musketry of soldiers who were concealed in Charlestown buildings, General Howe ordered shells to be thrown into the town. This set the buildings on fire, so that the second attack was made lurid by the flames and smoke. The spectators of this battle outnumbered both armies, and the scene has been described as follows: "To fill the eye,--a brilliantly appointed army advancing to the attack and storming the works, supported by co-operating ships and batteries; the blaze of the burning town, coursing whole streets or curling

1-Frothingham, Richard, History of the Siege of Boston, p.137.

up the spires of public edifices; the air above filled with clouds of dense black smoke, and the surrounding hills, fields, roofs, and steeples, occupied by crowds of spectators: to fill the ear,-- the shouts of the contending armies, the crash of the falling buildings and the roar of the cannon, mortars and musketry; to fill the mind, the high courage of men staking not only their lives, but their reptutation, on the uncertain issue of a civil war and the intense emotions of the near and dear connections standing in their presence; and, on the other side, the reflection that a defeat of the regulars would be a final loss to British empire in America."[1]

In the second attack, General Howe again led the troops against the rail fence: "Two of his aids, and other officers near him, were shot down, and at times he was left almost alone."[2] The second retreat was in greater disorder than the first, but the American reinforcements were confused, frightened and undisciplined. Any effort spent in attempting to fortify Bunker's Hill was wasted. "Captain Chester (of Connecticut) marched on near the close of the engagement, while the British were coming up the third time. Three regiments were near him when he left Cambridge, which hastened forward in advance of his company; but when Chester overtook them, at Bunker Hill, there was hardly a company in any kind of order. The men had scattered behind rocks, hay-cocks, and apple-trees. Parties also were continually retreating from the field; some, alleging

1-Frothingham, Richard, The History of the Siege of Boston, p.144.

2-Ibid, p.145.

they had been all night and day on fatigue without sleep or refreshment; some that they had no officers to lead them; frequently, twenty were about a wounded man, when not a quarter part could touch him to advantage; while others were going off without any excuse. Chester obliged one company, rank and file, to return to the lines."[1]

General Howe insisted on another attempt, although some of the British officers advised against it. The boats had been sent back to Boston, so there was no retreat. Four hundred marines under Col. Small had come from Boston. General Clinton, who served as a volunteer, aided in rallying the troops. Although General Howe had lost some confidence, he had learned from bitter experience: "He ordered the men to lay aside their knapsacks, to move forward in column, to reserve their fire, to rely on the bayonet, to direct their main attack on the redoubt, and to push the artillery forward to a position that would enable it to rake the breastwork."[2] This time General Howe led the grenadiers and light-infantry in front of the breastwork, while Generals Clinton and Pigot were on the extreme left to scale the redoubt. By this time, few of the Americans had more than one round of ammunition. The British artillery on the right drove the soldiers from the breastwork into the redoubt. The columns attacked the southern and eastern sides of the redoubt, so that it was under fire on three sides at once. A confused retreat of the Americans followed in which the British did not follow their enemy very strenuously.

1-Frothingham, Richard, History of the Siege of Boston, pp.147-8.

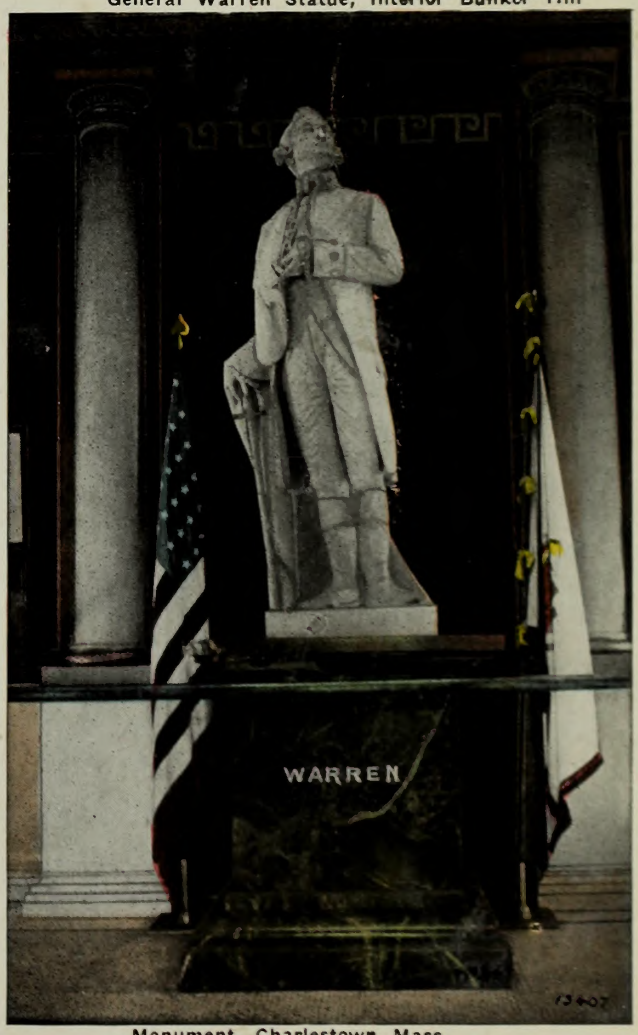
2-Ibid, pp.148-9.

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL, JUNE 17, 1775, CHARLESTOWN, MASS.

COLONEL WILLIAM PRESCOTT STATUE, BUNKER HILL,

CHARLESTOWN, MASS.

General Warren Statue, Interior Bunker Hill



Monument, Charlestown, Mass.

"The time the battle lasted is variously stated; some accounts state four hours, but they include the heavy fire of artillery that covered the landing. The time the engagement lasted, from the first fire of the musketry till the last, was exactly one hour and a half."[1] There is considerable disagreement as to the losses in battle: "The loss of the British was admitted in the official account to have been two hundred and twenty-six killed, eight hundred and twenty-eight wounded; total, one thousand and fifty-four. But the Americans set it as high as fifteen hundred. The wounded, during the whole night and the next day, were conveyed to Boston, where the streets were filled with groans and lamentations."[2] As to the American losses, we have General Ward's Orderly Book--"June 17. The battle of Charlestown was fought this day. Killed, one hundred and fifteen; wounded, three hundred and five; captured, thirty. Total, four hundred and fifty."

Where was Israel Putnam during these events? Since no person could be everywhere at once, many different observations of the battle were made. Unfortunately, many of the testimonials of eye witnesses were not put in writing, and many were written only after years had gone by.

Samuel Swett, whose account of Putnam at Bunker Hill appears as an appendix to later editions of Humphreys' Life of Putnam, was one of the chief defenders of Putnam. According to Swett, Putnam had a general superintendence of the expedition to Charlestown and

1-Frothingham, Richard, History of the Siege of Boston, pp.191-2.
2-Ibid, p.194.

accompanied the troops on the night of June 16. After encouraging the men, Putnam went back to camp to get a fresh horse. At daybreak, he sent a lieutenant to General Ward to obtain a horse, but he was mounted before the latter's return. He interviewed Warren while on Bunker Hill and advised the latter of the importance of the redoubt in the coming engagement. While the enemy was landing, Putnam ordered Captain Knowlton to take his Connecticut troops to a position behind a rail fence which ran from the redoubt toward the Mystic river. Realizing the importance of a fortification on Bunker Hill to cover a possible retreat, Putnam got a detachment to convey the intrenching tools there and to start digging. Then he returned to Cambridge to urge upon General Ward the importance of sending reinforcements. His trips over Charlestown Neck were made dangerous by the British ships. Putnam reserved a part of Stark's New Hampshire regiment to work on Bunker Hill, and sent the rest to join the Connecticut troops at the rail fence.

"The drums beat to arms. Putnam left his works commenced on Bunker Hill, and led the troops into action."[1] Putnam rode up and down the lines, restraining the men until they could not miss their aim. He also saw the artillery company under Callender in retreat and forced them back, failing, however, to prevent the men from using their muskets in preference to the cannon which they didn't understand.

Between the first and second attacks, Putnam rode back to Charlestown Neck to lead over reinforcements from Ward and he found Colonel Gerrish and his men resting on the west side of Bunker Hill, where they were protected by the summit of the hill, which was raked

1-Swett's Account in Humphreys, David, Life of Putnam, p.227

by British musketry and cannon. Gerrish's men refused to follow Putnam to Breed's Hill. Captain Ford, who was leading reinforcements, was ordered by Putnam to drag Callender's deserted cannon. Swett claimed that Putnam helped to point the cannon toward the enemy. It was during this second assault that Putnam observed his old friend, the British officer, Major Small, who had been left alone and was about to be shot down. Putnam begged the men to spare his old friend -- another example of leniency to the British.

Between the second and third attacks, Putnam again rode to the rear to urge the reinforcements which were sheltered by Bunker Hill to come up to the line, but he got only a few to follow him. When the retreat came, Putnam rode between the enemy and the Americans, unsuccessfully striving to rally the latter to renew the fight on Bunker Hill.

A committee of Congress which was appointed to inquire of Putnam and others "who were in the hottest of the battle" reported that "the General charged Captain Callender and another artillery officer with infamous cowardice."[1] From this it would seem that Putnam was not under suspicion. As summarized above (pp.45-47), one has in detail the favorable account which Swett gave of Putnam at Bunker Hill. It is this account and the testimonials on which it rests that are attacked by all who claim that Putnam's position was dishonorable. Swett's sources were testimonials gathered from veterans of the day, later printed by the Boston Sentinel. Of interest is the testimonial given by President Adams, Senior, in

1-Swett's account in Humphreys' Life of Putnam, p.269

Swett's sources: "This I do say without reserve, I never heard the least insinuation of dissatisfaction with the character of General Putnam during his whole life."[1] Among those testifying were members of Colonel Stark's regiment and of Putnam's.Judge Advocate Tudor, soon after General Washington's court martial was ordered, said, "I never heard any insinuation against the conduct of General Putnam." These original documents were deposited by Mr. Swett with the Boston Athenaeum, but were lost and have been printed from the Boston Sentinel which had previously printed them.

Extracts from these testimonials gathered by Swett prove that, if the memories of veterans were accurate, Putnam took a thoroughly commendable part in the front line. A man in Colonel Stark's regiment -- Reuben Kemp of Brooklyn, Connecticut -- stated: 'Arrived at the high grounds over the neck; were furnished with intrenching tools and began to throw up a breastwork, in ten or fifteen mimutes the drums beat to arms, and we were marched immediately. General Putnam seemed to have the ordering of things. He charged the men not to fire till the enemy came close to the works and to take good aim and make every shot kill a man. A few pieces were discharged before the order, General Putnam paced along the lines quickly and threatened to stab any one who fired without order. The enemy got pretty near the works, we were ordered to take good aim and fire. At this time General Putnam was constantly pacing backward and forward from right to left."[2]

1-Swett's Testimonials as republished from the Boston Sentinel

2-Pamphlet of extracts from Boston Sentinel

"Isaac Bassett, Killingley, Gen. Putnam's Regiment deposes: 'was at the redoubt and breastwork just as the action commenced; saw Gen.Putnam there with his sword drawn, encouraging and animating the troops. My father was going off with a wounded man, Gen. Putnam stopped him, pricking his arm with his sword, and told him not a soldier should leave the ground. I saw Gen. Putnam in the hottest of the fight, calling on the men to stand their ground; I am sure he was at the same post when the enemy scaled the walls of the redoubt."[1]

"Ebenezer Bean, Conway, Stark's Regiment, at the Redoubt, about twelve: "Gen. Putnam was there and very active, was urging the men on, giving orders, riding from one end of the line to the other as far as he could observe, and continued active through the action; in my opinion fought with great bravery."

"Major Elihu Lyman, Greenfield, a Lieutenant in the battle, deposes: "Well remembers Gen. Putnam was present directing the retreat, riding backward and forward between us and the British, and appeared cool and deliberate, frequently speaking to the men. He continued with us till we were out of the reach of small arms. I now perfectly remember that I than expected every moment to see Gen. Putnam shot from his horse. I knew Gen. Putnam perfectly, was in the army with him in the French war, and five years in the Revolutionary war."

"Alexander Davidson, Edgecombe, Ford's company, deposes: Putnam ordered our company to carry the cannon, deserted by Callender, to the rail fence; he accompanied the pieces himself, saw them until they commenced firing them. What time Putnam left our company I

1-Pamphlet of extracts from Boston Sentinel, dates unspecified.

cannot say, but he was with us at the rail fence when the battle began, animating the men and telling us not to fear."

The following statements were published in the Patriot, by Gen. Dearborn.

"Captain S.R. Trevett, Marblehead, Capt. Art. - about 1, the 17th, left Cambridge; saw Putnam riding toward Cambridge, and back toward Charlestown in ten or fifteen minutes; when arrived at the N.W. side of Bunker Hill.

(This was some time after the battle commenced, and after the first retreat of the British, as Capt. Trevett had very often informed me.) "Saw Gen. Putnam dismounted and several others; went to select a station for my pieces, saw Gen. Putnam on my return, the engagement was then going on; arrived at rail fence when retreat commenced; descending N.W. side of Bunker Hill, again saw Gen. Putnam in the same place putting his tent on his horse, asked him where I should carry my field piece, he said to Cambridge.'"

"Rev. Dan'l. Chaplin, D.D., Groton, and Rev. John Bullard Pepperell. Were intimate with Col. Prescott; he told us repeatedly that when the retreat was ordered and commenced, and he was descending the hill, he met Gen. Putnam and said to him, 'why did you not support me, General, with your men,'as he had reason to expect according to agreement. Putnam answered, 'I could not drive the dogs up.' Prescott pointedly said to him, 'If you could not drive them up, you might have led them up.'"

Two other statements follow which were taken down in writing by General Sullivan and other directors of the Bunker Hill monument

association:

"Francis Davidson, Londonderry, Ford's company, at rail fence. The enemy marched toward us under a heavy fire from their ships and their field pieces. We were ordered to lie down till the enemy were near enough to be within good gun shot; that order was given by Gen. Putnam, who was near us at the time."

"Philip Bagley, (a respectable Deputy Sheriff at Newburyport, for nearly thirty years past,) Frye's Regiment. Went over night; fought at the breastwork till they turned the corner of the rail fence and began to rake the whole breastwork. Saw Putnam pass up and down the line on horseback during the battle, encouraging the soldiers. The shot was very thick where he was; he had a very calm, encouraging look. Knew him because I had seen him at Cambridge."

It was on such contradictory testimonials that Dawson and Griswold based their arguments upon Putnam. Dawson charged that Reuben Kemp testified for political purposes and that his words were changed by Swett from the original, which declared that he remained at the redoubt, although Stark's regiment to which he belonged was stationed at the rail fence near the Mystic river.[1] Likewise, Bassett of Putnam's regiment stated he was at the breastwork, though all Connecticut troops were with Knowlton at the rail-fence! Furthermore, Dawson claimed that Davidson asserted he was at the same time on Bunker Hill and at the rail fence though the above quotation from Swett does not necessarily show this.

1-Dawson, Henry B., Gleanings from the Harvest-field of American History, p.145.

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Dawson states that not even Putnam's friends, Swett included, claim that Putnam fought in the second and third assaults. But the writer found that Swett mentioned Putnam's directing the artillery at the front line,[1] and his saving his British friend, Major Small[2], during the second assault. Did Dawson overlook this? Dawson calls Swett's account of the retreat "fancy let loose" and describes Putnam as tending to his tent poles[3], though the writer fails to understand why these should have been conveyed under heavy fire across Charlestown Neck to the battlefield. It would be impossible to see the original testimonials which Dawson and Griswold quote so glibly and even if this were possible, one could not discover their accuracy,because political considerations and the lapse of time since the battle influenced them. Furthermore, Dawson does just what he charged Swett of doing -- quoting men whose regiments ar identifications are not made clear.

Most of the authors who picture Putnam in a favorable light at Bunker Hill have used Swett as their chief source. This is true of W.F. Livingston, William Cutter, and of Richard Frothingham. Charges, which represent that author's personal feeling, were made by Dawson against Swett's work, "I cannot forget that this gentleman, for party purposes, in order to influence a popular election for governor of Massachusetts, embarked in a Putnam Crusade, 'devoting two months of his life, night and day, to this subject, and that with all the malignity of party spirit, immediately after the close of the last

1-Swett, S., An Accont of Putnam at Bunker Hill in Life of Israel Putnam, by David Humphreys, p.239.

2-Ibid, p.242.

3-Dawson, Henry B., Gleanings from the Harvest-field of American History, p.151

war with Great Britain ..."[1]

In 1818, Major-General Dearborn published an account of the battle of Bunker Hill, which largely contradicts Swett's account. General Dearborn was then a candidate for the governorship of Massachusetts, as Dawson stated, and Swett offered to pay veterans' expenses for a day in Boston to get testimonies of an event which happened some forty-three years before. Were the veterans at all attracted by the pleasure of a day in the city to retell old tales in a favorable light?

Substantially, Dearborn's testimony follows. Putnam rode off with spades and pick axes to a safe position on the sheltered side of Bunker Hill, where he kept with him almost as many men as were engaged in the battle, and he made no effort to check the enemy or to cover the retreat. Dearborn claimed that his position on the right of the line at the rail fence enabled him to see the entire action. He continued:

"General Putnam had entered our army at the commencement of the Revolutionary War, with such an universal popularity as can scarcely now be conceived, even by those who then felt the whole force of it, and no one can at this time offer any satisfactory reasons why he was held in such high estimation.

"In the battle of Bunker Hill he took post on the declivity towards Charlestown Neck, where I saw him on horseback as we passed on to Breed's Hill, with Col. Gerrish by his side. I heard the gallant Col. Prescott (who commanded in the redoubt) observe

1-Dawson, Henry B., Gleanings..., p.137.

after the war, at the table of his Excellency James Bowdoin, then Governor of this Commonwealth, 'that he sent three messengers during the battle to Gen. Putnam requesting him to come forward and take the command, there being no general officer present, and the relative rank of the Colonel not having been settled; but that he received no answer, and his whole conduct was such, both during the action and the retreat, that he ought to have been shot.' He remained, at or near the top of Bunker Hill until the retreat, with Col. Gerrish by his side; I saw them together when we retreated. He not only continued at that distance himself during the whole of the action, but had a force with him nearly as large as that engaged. No reinforcement of men or ammunition was sent to our assistance; and, instead of attempting to cover the retreat of those who had expended their last shot in the face of the enemy, he retreated in company with Col. Gerrish, and his whole force, without discharging a single musket; but what is still more astonishing, Col. Gerrish was arrested for cowardice, tried, cashiered, and universally execrated; while not a word was said against the conduct of Gen. Putnam, whose extraordinary popularity alone saved him, not only from trial, but even from censure. Col. Gerrish commanded a regiment and should have been at its head. His regiment was not in action although ordered — but as he was in the suite of the General, and appeared to be in the situation of adjutant general, why was he not directed by Putnam to join it, or the regiment sent into action under the senior officer present with it?"[1]

1-Dearborn, H., An Account of the Battle of Bunker Hill, pp.7-8.

On this quotation is based most of the adverse opinion of Putnam at the battle of Bunker Hill.

The May 1, 1818 Boston Daily Advertiser carried an anonymous article in reply to the narrative of General Dearborn. The author made considerable ridicule of the Dearborn article by inquiring how Putnam could have rode off with a number of pick axes and spades in his hand, while he galloped at full speed. He urged that a coward would have left the spades and pickaxes. Then, too, he doubted the possibility of finding such a large body of cowards inactive, though but a few hundred yards from the battle, as our volunteer militia had to be restrained rather than urged on. He asked why there was no public censure of Putnam, and why Washington should have chosen him for the posts on the Hudson. He also thought that it seemed queer for Trumbull, the contemporary artist, to have given Putnam such a prominent place in the painting of the battle, if there had been adverse opinion of Putnam current at the time.

John T. Fellows in his Veil Removed concluded that Putnam did not hold any command at Bunker Hill and that therefore he could not be censured by Washington. Putnam, he claimed, went to the rear to get reinforcements, but did not bring them up, and the failure of these caused the loss of the day. Apparently Putnam did not get the obedience of these men, who were unaware of his lack of command. He (Fellows) stated that the story about Putnam riding back and forth across Charlestown Neck was improbable as that would have been the work of a madman rather than showing the prudence that Putnam usually showed for his own person. Fellows declared that Putnam did not go

nearer the battle than Bunker Hill.

In 1860, the controversy over Putnam's conduct at Bunker Hill was renewed by a series of articles written by Henry B. Dawson and Adna C. Griswold, published as Gleanings from the Harvest-field of American History. Dawson followed rather closely the same arguments that Dearborn had used. He mentioned the removing of the intrenching tools, in spite of Prescott's statement that the men were needed at the redoubt. Furthermore, Dawson emphasized the fact that Putnam was seen by Stark's reinforcements, with a large body of troops which was safe from the enemy's artillery. He claimed that Putnam joined in the retreat and did not make the heroic stand that Swett described. Dawson felt that Putnam was put in the reserve of the army after Bunker Hill -- sent to defend New York under plans that could not be changed without the consent of the engineers, and that he was only given a command as an emergency, when General Greene became ill. This critic also stated that the defense of Bunker Hill was ordered by the Committee of Safety of Massachusetts at whose meetings General Putnam was not present, and that Prescott had full charge of the party sent to construct the redoubt. Dawson analyzed Putnam's position before, after and during each assault most minutely and concluded that he spent his time on the safe side of Bunker Hill. He depended upon testimonials, as already quoted, which were gathered largely by General Dearborn at the time when Swett was garnering his -- some forty years after the battle. Griswold, who defended Putnam in the controversy, followed the testimonials of Swett. Since Griswold was prone to quote flattering orations which have been given in memory of

Putnam, his account was not as strong as Dawson's.

In summarizing the arguments on both sides, certain deductions might be reached. Putnam's authority at Bunker Hill certainly rested upon his title as Brigadier General as made by the Connecticut General Assembly, and what he accomplished came from this prestige rather than from specific orders of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety which had authorized the defense of Charlestown. Apparently, he was unsuccessful in rallying the reinforcements to sufficient numbers, but this might have been due either to the untrained condition of raw militia or to lack of command in general. Putnam must have put his life in some danger in crossing Charlestown Neck and on the top of Bunker Hill, whether or not he reached the firing line on Breed's Hill. It may also be thought that Putnam's pet scheme was the defense of Bunker Hill to cover a possible retreat. One would feel that this time could have been better occupied in concentrating every effort at the line on Breed's Hill, as there was not sufficient time to build adequate defenses on Bunker Hill.

Chapter VII

Besieging Boston and Fortifying New York

The night after the Bunker Hill battle Putnam took possession of Prospect Hill. Posts at Lechmere Point, Cobble Hill and Ploughed Hill were later developed by Washington; together these fortifications sealed up Charlestown Neck. Putnam was quite active in superintending the construction of these fortifications.

On July 2d, General Washington arrived at Cambridge and on the next morning, under a great elm tree, he assumed command of the soldiers. On this momentous occasion, Putnam was among the officers who accompanied the Commander-in-Chief at the ceremony.

It was not until July 4, 1775 that Washington issued the following order bestowing upon the officers the rank which Congress had granted them:

"The Honorable Artemas Ward, Charles Lee, Philip Schuyler, and Israel Putnam, Esqs., are appointed major-general in the American army, by the honorable Continental Congress, and due obedience is to be paid them as such."[1]

Some time after this, the following eight brigadier-generals were announced: Seth Pomeroy, Richard Montgomery, David Wooster, William Heath, Joseph Spencer, John Thomas, John Sullivan, and Nathaniel Greene. Washington had plenty of trouble on his hands because Putnam had been advanced over Spencer and Pomeroy over Thomas. Spencer left the army in disgust, but did not get much sympathy in Connecticut; he finally returned to the service to rank

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.247, General Orders printed in Proceedings of the Mass. Historical Society, Vol. XV, p.114.

after Putnam. Silas Deane was prejudiced in favor of Putnam on this occasion, perhaps because his step-son, Lieutenant Samuel B. Webb, had become Putnam's aide-de-camp. Webb wrote to his step-father as follows: "You'll find the Generals Washington and Lee are vastly fonder and think higher of Putnam than any man in the army; and he truly is the Hero of the day."[1] It was Webb who composed nearly all the letters which Putnam sent out.

Washington removed Putnam from Prospect Hill and placed him at Cambridge over the center division, which consisted of two brigades. The Inman house was such a comfortable headquarters that he sent for his wife to join him. Carriages and horses, which belonged to the Loyalist owners, were used to take the general's wife out riding and calling. Once again Putnam showed his sympathy for his old comrades of the French and Indian War period; for he sent provisions to Major Moncrieffe and to the American prisoners: "General Putnam's compliments to his old friend Major Moncrieffe. Is sorry he could not sooner send him some of the comforts of life. He now sends him (through the hands of Major Bruce) some mutton, beef, and fresh butter, which he begs his acceptance of, with a hearty welcome."[2]

The story is told that on at least one occasion Putnam forced the dignified Washington to laugh heartily. It was discovered that Dr. Benjamin Church of the military-hospital was guilty of treason, and the woman who acted as bearer of letters to him was discovered, so Putnam undertook her arrest. "Tradition tells how Washington was looking from the chamber of his headquarters at the Craigie House

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.249 ; Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb, ed. by W.C.Ford, v.1.

2-Proceedings of the Mass. Historical Society, v.XIV., p.269.

when he beheld the General approaching in great speed on horseback with the stout lady en croupe behind him. Not even the Commander-in-Chief could keep from laughing at the ludicrous sight presented by the sturdy 'Wolf-Hunter' and his prize; and he hardly had time to recover his gravity before the front door was thrown open and the culprit was made to enter the hall by the strong arm of her escort. From the head of the broad staircase, Washington, in as stern a tone as he could assume, warned her that nothing but a full confession could save her from a halter. She told in detail the story of Dr. Church's treachery; and he was forthwith arrested, tried, and imprisoned."[1]

Putnam aided in the fortification of Cobble Hill in December, but he was unmolested. He also had some work at Lechmere's Point. The great lack at this time was sufficient cannon-balls, and it is related that Putnam established men at a considerable distance from the British vessel, Somerset, in order to draw her fire. Without injuring any of the Americans, several hundred cannon-balls were picked out of the sand.

When Montgomery was killed in Canada, Congress asked Washington to furnish a general to replace him. This letter, dated January 30, 1776, comments: "... General Putnam is a most valuable man and a fine executive officer; but I do not know how he would conduct in a separate department. He is a younger major-general than Mr. Schuyler, who, as I have observed, having determined to continue in the service, will, I expect, repair to Canada."[2] Because his commander was uncertain of his abilities, Putnam was kept at Cambridge.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp. 258-9.

2-Force, P., American Archives, Fourth Series, Vol.V., pp.787,843.

When the American fortifications were observed on Dorchester Heights, the British tried to attack them, but found the waves so high it was impossible to land troops. If the British had attacked Dorchester Heights, Putnam was to have led four thousand men in an attack upon Boston. The storm gave the Americans an opportunity to complete their defences, so that the position of the British in Boston became increasingly dangerous. On March 17th, the city was evacuated.

Washington believed that the British ships would sail for New York city, and so he despatched Putnam to have charge of the fortifying of the place. The latter put New York under martial law, and captured a boat's crew on Staten Island. However, the fortifications had to be in accordance with a plan already drawn up. Putnam had charge of those upon Governor's Island and at Red Hook on the southern end of Brooklyn peninsula. Both sides of the East river from the Battery to Hell Gate were fortified. Guns were located on Brooklyn Heights, and redoubts were built on the southern end of Manhattan Island. Since there were no funds, Major Sherburne was sent to the Continental Congress for an appropriation of three hundred thousand dollars to carry out these plans. After Putnam had been in chief command for ten days, Washington came to New York on April 13, 1776. All streets leading from the water were barricaded, and a fleet of schooners, sloops and whaleboats was organized.

While Washington was absent at Philadelphia in consultation with Congress, Putnam was again in chief command for two weeks, but during

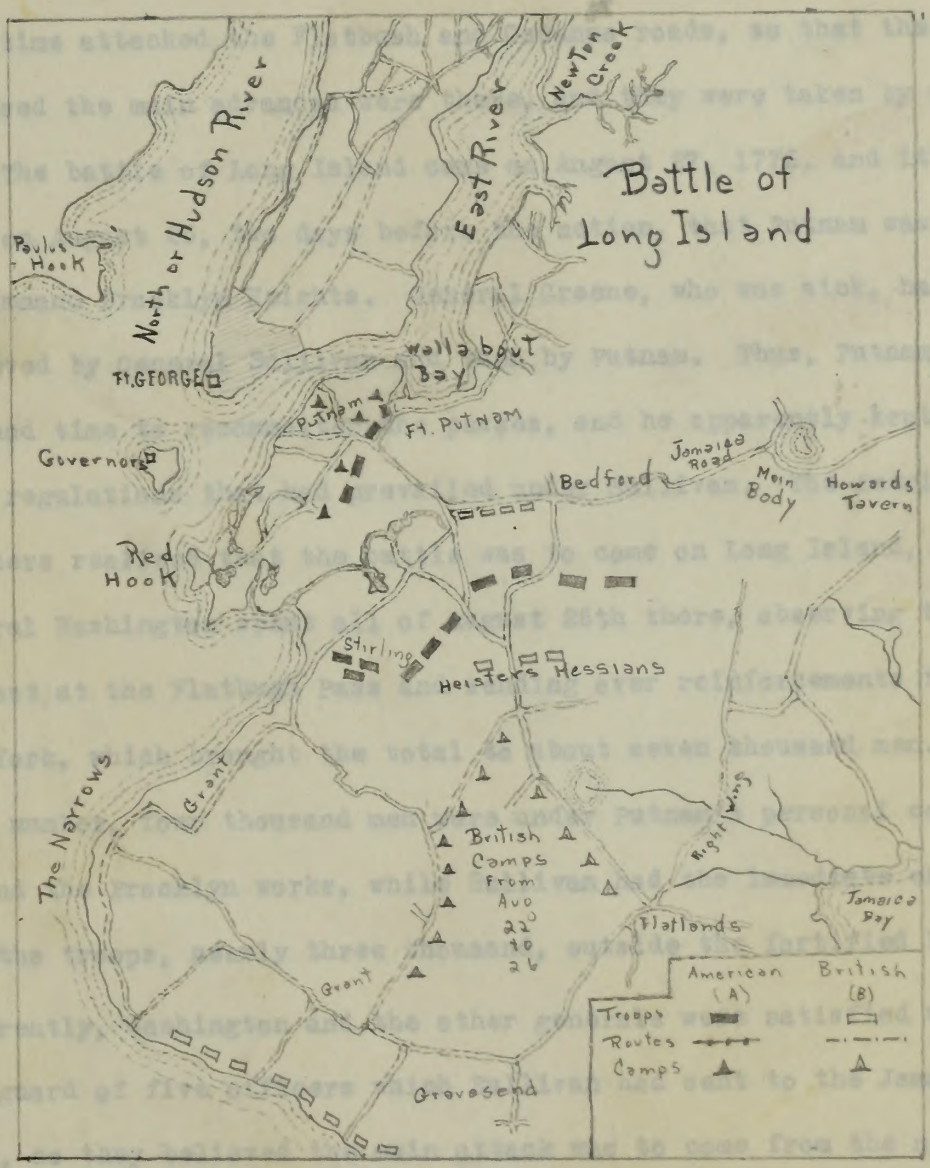
most of the time, Putnam superintended the work ordered by Washington. Letters reporting on the completion of signals were written by his aide-de-camp, Webb. On June 22d, when the latter was promoted to a similar position under Washington, Major Aaron Burr was made aide-de-camp, under Putnam. Burr had been most unhappy while serving Washington, but was content during his year of service under Putnam. On June 29, forty-five vessels were sighted off Sandy Hook, and within four days a hundred vessels had arrived in the Narrows. The only land the British then possessed was Staten Island. Putnam seems to have been in charge of the American boats and fire-ships which were to attempt to prevent the British from coming up the Hudson river. However, about three hundred ships and thirty-one thousand men had gathered in New York harbor by midsummer, so Putnam's little fleet was futile in combatting the British.

Putnam showed considerable interest in the invention of David Bushnell, also of Connecticut. This submarine device was called the American Turtle. It was designed to be rowed under water and was capable of setting off a magazine of powder under a ship. Unfortunately, the man who took charge of the venture was inexperienced so that he miscalculated his position and the explosion merely blew up a vast column of water. Nothing further was done with this forerunner of the modern undersea craft.

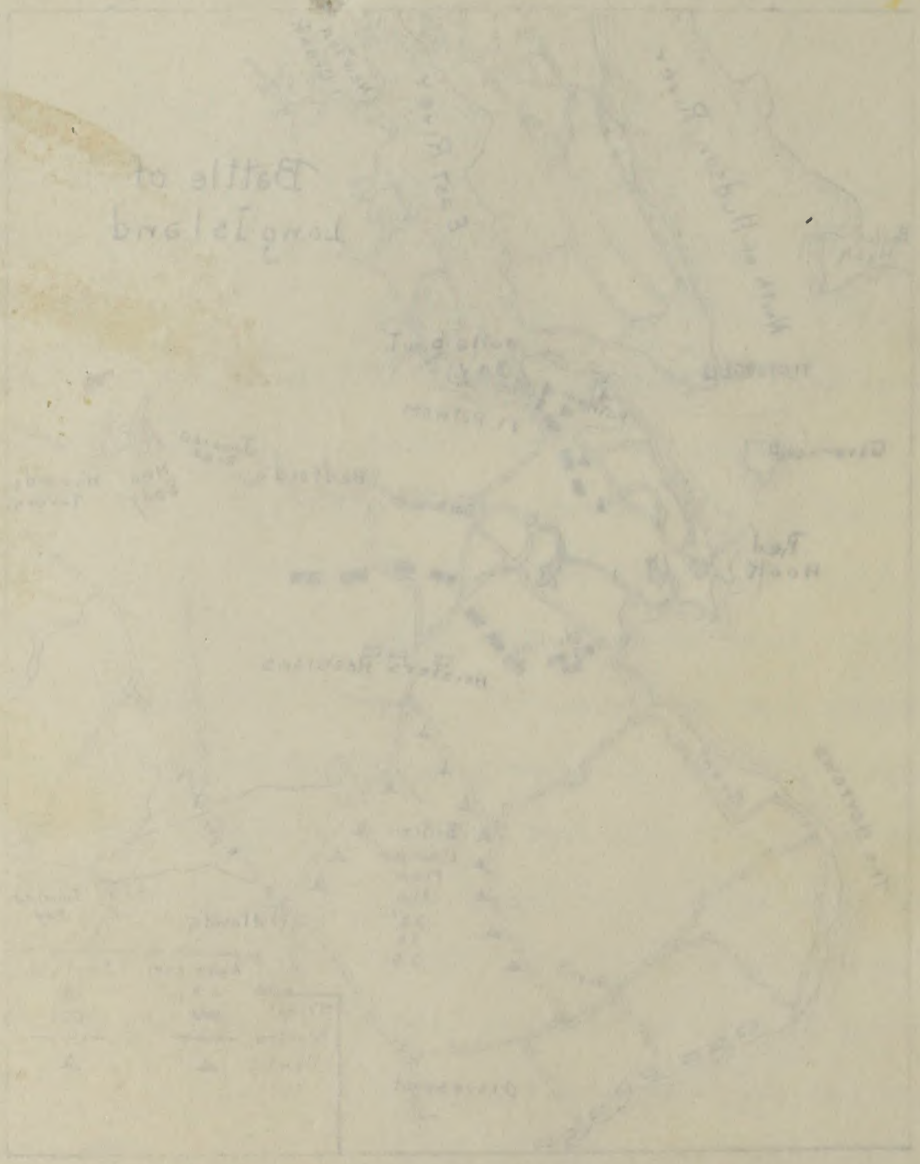
During these days in New York, the daughter of an old friend, Margaret Moncrieffe, caused Putnam some criticism. She was living with friends in New Jersey and wished to visit her father, Major James Moncrieffe, a British officer on Staten Island. While Washington

distrusted her, Putnam did all he could to aid her in this project. For a time she was entertained in the Putnam home in New York, both before and after the visit to her father. She was suspected of spying upon the Americans, and so this was used against Putnam as another indication of his friendliness to the enemy.

On August 22, 1776, the British began to cross over from Staten Island to Long Island. Their line extended from Gravesend to Flatlands, with one division encamped opposite the Flatbush Pass. To understand the situation, it is necessary to describe the American position. The Americans held a strong position on Brooklyn Heights. This camp was strengthened by lines which extended across the entire peninsula from Gowanus Bay to Wallabout Bay. Beyond this line to the southeast were wooded hills which might be crossed by infantry but not by cavalry or artillery. There were only four passes through the hills. Of these, the Gowanus Road was nearest the coast; the Flatbush Road was about a mile and a half from the Brooklyn fortifications; and a third road, farther to the east went from Bedford to Flatbush. There was still another pass, known as the Jamaica Road, which was about four miles from the Americans and to their extreme left. Little attention had been given to this, as it was considered too far away, but it was through this last pass that the British eventually made their way, capturing five officers who were stationed there to report on the enemy's movements, and flanking the Americans so that they were attacked in the rear while attempting to defend the other passes. The British never made a charge upon Brooklyn Heights, but succeeded in hemming in the American troops, so that they evacuated the fortifications.



From The Winning of Freedom
by
W. Wood and R. Gabriel



Thus, the key to an understanding of the battle of Long Island is the defense of the Jamaica Road. The question of blame for the loss of the battle rests upon whose fault it was that the British were allowed to get through this pass without any resistance. They had at the same time attacked the Flatbush and Gowanus roads, so that the Americans supposed the main advances were there, and they were taken by surprise.

The battle of Long Island came on August 27, 1776, and it was only on August 25, two days before the action, that Putnam was assigned to command Brooklyn Heights. General Greene, who was sick, had been relieved by General Sullivan and then by Putnam. Thus, Putnam had not had time to reconnoiter the passes, and he apparently kept the same regulations that had prevailed under Sullivan. The American officers realized that the battle was to come on Long Island, and General Washington spent all of August 26th there, observing the outpost at the Flatbush Pass and sending over reinforcements from New York, which brought the total to about seven thousand men. "Of this number, four thousand men were under Putnam's personal command behind the Brooklyn works, while Sullivan had the immediate charge of all the troops, nearly three thousand, outside the fortified lines."[1] Apparently, Washington and the other generals were satisfied with the guard of five officers which Sullivan had sent to the Jamaica Pass, as they believed the main attack was to come from the nearer passes. It has also been argued that had a sufficient force been sent to guard the Jamaica Pass, the British would have broken through one of the other passes, because the Americans had insufficient troops to

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp.296-7.

protect all four.

While Sullivan was making good the defense of the Flatbush Pass, news came that the main army, with Generals Howe, Henry Clinton, Lords Percy and Cornwallis, was pouring down from the Jamaica Pass. The Americans fought bravely, but had difficulty in keeping from being surrounded by the two forces of British. Washington crossed over from New York and was present on Brooklyn Heights, where he observed the brave but futile fighting of his army.

To whom should blame for the miserable defeat on Long Island be given? The historian, Greene,[1] charged that Washington, who had frequently examined the ground and suspected the attack was imminent, had failed to give Putnam specific instructions as to the disposition of troops. Washington chose to allow the troops to remain outside the works. Would a plan of keeping them within the redoubts have forced a direct attack and resulted in another Bunker Hill? The lack of cavalry and General Greene's illness were both great misfortunes to be added to the fact that the British regular troops were nearly three times the number of the untrained Americans. Finally, "Putnam, in spite of his well-earned reputation for gallantry at Ticonderoga, eighteen years before, and later at Concord and Bunker Hill, did practically nothing as a commanding general; and Washington never again placed him in a position of high responsibility."[2] One might inquire what gallantry Putnam showed at Concord! Dawson, in placing the blame upon Putnam, says, "... It is said, and has never been contradicted,

1-Greene, Francis Vinton, The Revolutionary War

2-Ibid, p.40.

that General Washington gave General Putnam positive instructions to guard the passes through the hills leading to Brooklyn; it is said, also without contradiction, that General Sullivan, his predecessor and second in command, enforced the same measures on his attention; it is known that, although the enemy, in full force, was encamped within four or five miles, opposite two of those very passes, General Putnam never reconnoitred that enemy's position -- in fact, that he never left Brooklyn; and it is equally well known that, although the enemy was then encamped at Flatbush, the mounted patrols which General Sullivan had established ... were withdrawn."[1] It is significant that Dawson does not include proof from sources that Putnam withdrew the patrols. It is commonly held by secondary sources that the five officers who made up the regular patrol of the Jamaica Road were on duty as usual, but were surprised and captured by the British. Mr. Field in his Introductory Narrative[2] descriptive of the battle says of Putnam, "... Sometimes dashing along on horseback at full speed, his uniform consisting of a soiled shirt over which he wore only a sleveless waistcoat, with a common hanger slung across his broad shoulders by a leathern belt, this person exhibited a tireless energy in riding rapidly along the lines, without apparently any well defined purpose."[2] He concluded that Putnam confined his efforts to ordering the men to reserve their fire and in moving up

1-Dawson, Henry B., Gleanings from the Harvest-field of American History, pp.10-11.

2-Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, p.221.

and down the lines -- an ineffectual personage. From this, Putnam appeares to have been faced with tremendous odds, but to have exhibited no strategy or great daring -- to have been entirely negative in a crisis.

The Americans lost four hundred dead and wounded and a thousand prisoners, including Generals Stirling and Sullivan. The British force consisted of twenty thousand men, so the ill-trained Americans were vastly outnumbered. They continued to hold the camp on the Heights, while the British made plans for a siege. Skirmishes occurred when the British tried to construct trenches near the American works. A council of war decided upon the immediate removal of the Americans to New York. This was accomplished on the night of August 29th, without the British learning of it. Thanks to the seamanship of Gloucester sailors, Washington moved his men in spite of adverse weather.

With the British in control of Brooklyn Heights, it was known that the Americans would have to evacuate New York. On September 12th, it was decided that the troops must be led from the city, and Putnam was given charge of their removal. On September 15th, came the fighting at Kip's Bay, when Washington and Putnam vainly strove to prevent the Americans from fleeing before the British, who had landed at the foot of Thirty-fourth Street. Putnam dashed back into the city and urged his men on, helping to prevent their being cut off on the southern end of Manhattan Island. When the American army reached Harlem Heights in its retreat, it was thoroughly discouraged, though a masterly retreat had been accomplished.

The battle of Harlem Heights restored some courage to the Americans. This took place on Morningside Heights, near the present

site of Columbia University. Washington had sent out a small body of Rangers under Colonel Thomas Knowlton for scouting, and they had met a larger body of British. The Americans were forced to retreat before the superior numbers, but they reported that the British made up only a comparatively small party which was a mile from the main army. Washington attempted to surround the British and capture them, but he was prevented by the approach of large British reinforcements. The men who fled at Kip's Bay redeemed themselves by fighting gallantly. About eighteen hundred Americans took part in the fight; and such officers as Col. Reed, and Generals Greene and Putnam led the men into the action. Unfortunately, Colonel Knowlton, who had served so well at the rail fence on the Bunker Hill battle, was killed.

The Americans had hoped to close the Hudson river to shipping by sinking ships in the channel, but the obstruction was not strong enough to oppose the strength of the current and several British ships. When the British attempted to land troops north of the American army, it was feared that the former hoped to surround them, so Harlem Heights was evacuated and the army was sent to White Plains. Here trenches were dug, and an army of thirteen thousand Americans faced an equal number of British. The enemy did not make a direct attack, but sent a party against Col. Rufus Putnam, the enginner, who was laying out the defenses on Chatterton Hill. A relief party under Putnam arrived in time to cover the retreat from the hill. This engagement was known as the Battle of White Plains.

By November 5th, the British went off towards the Hudson river, a move which the American generals could not understand. Washington

divided his forces, sending Putnam with several thousand men into New Jersey. Heath was left at Peekskill to guard the approach to the Highlands, and Lee was left at North Castle.

Greene desired to make an attempt to hold Fort Washington, which was directly across the Hudson from Fort Lee. He was reinforced, though Washington feared a defense would be hopeless, as it proved. From the palisades across the river, Putnam, Greene and Washington watched this assault upon the works, which resulted in the fall of Fort Washington with its nearly two thousand men and stores. This made the evacuation of Fort Lee necessary, and Washington with his fast shrinking army was forced to retreat to Princeton, and then to Trenton. The next object of Washington's concern was Philadelphia, so, on December 9th, he sent Putnam to take command of that city.

Chapter VIII

Putnam at Philadelphia

Putnam's chief duties at Philadelphia were to organize recruits, throw up lines about the city for its defence, and keep the Loyalist element in check by establishing martial law. All the boats on the creeks were collected to prevent their falling into the hands of the British. Although Putnam did not wish to, he was compelled to exempt the Quakers, whom he called "Drones of Society", from military service. Another task was the denial of a rumor that Philadelphia was to be burned to prevent its being taken by the British. The Loyalist sentiment in Philadelphia was strong, and Putnam had to use considerable force to compel the acceptance of Continental money.

The Continental Congress, then in session at Philadelphia, became quite nervous at all the preparations for a British assault and they consulted Putnam as to the advisability of remaining. Upon his advice, they adjourned to Baltimore, Maryland.

Washington sent Adjutant-General Reed to Philadelphia to ask Putnam for co-operation in the surprise attack on Trenton. Putnam believed he could cross the Delaware and aid in the assault that was to come on Christmas night, but at the last moment he decided that Philadelphia should not be left without guards, as he feared a Loyalist revolt. Washington had to make the attempt without support.

This memorable victory at Trenton resulted in the capture of many Hessian prisoners who were marched through the streets of Philadelphia for the effect they would have on the inhabitants, and they were temporarily lodged in the barracks before they were sent to Baltimore.

One of the Hessian officers who saw Putnam remarked, "This old gray-beard may be a good, honest man, but nobody but the rebels would have made him a general."[1] Some of the Philadelphia gentry had been surprised that this unpolished Yankee should have become a general. Apparently Putnam, though hearty and a hale fellow well met, was not noted for the social graces.

Putnam was ordered by Washington to guard the baggage, while Washington was attacking Princeton and occupying Trenton. Several messengers had to be sent to Putnam before the latter could be prevailed upon to advance with his seven or eight hundred men. The following is an extract from one of Washington's letters to Read:

"Many days ago I wrote to General Putnam supposing him to be at Princeton to have the stores rescued from the hands of the Militia who had borne them off, and had no doubt but he had done it. What in the name of Heaven can he be doing at Crosswicks I know not, after my repeated wishes to hear of him at Princeton. Surely he is there by this time."[2] Putnam had been awaiting reinforcements to take charge of Philadelphia and worrying over the loss of men who refused to serve after their term of enlistment expired.

Among the prisoners whom Putnam found at Princeton was one McPherson, who was anxious to get a British friend to make his will. This embarrassed Putnam, as he did not wish to have the enemy know how few men there were to guard Princeton. To conceal this scarcity, Putnam had lights put in all the deserted houses and in the college

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.336 - Journal of the Regiment von Lossberg (Fiel)

2-Ibid, p.339, Washington's Correspondence.

buildings and all night he paraded his men singly and in small groups by the buildings where the British were located, so that the latter reported Putnam's forces to be at least four thousand. His post at Princeton was the right wing of the army, of which the main body remained at Morristown with Washington. Small parties were sent out to surprise British foraging parties and pickets.

Chapter IX

The Hudson Highlands

In 1777, came the threefold campaign for New York state. Washington was frequently engaged in moving troops back and forth from the Highlands of the Hudson to the Delaware Valley to correspond with the movement of British troops. It was a battle of wits to determine the strategic position. During this eventful year, Putnam had as his duty the prevention of the British from going up the Hudson river and the holding of the forts which commanded the entrances to the Highlands. He was greatly handicapped by the frequent removal of troops and the uncertainty of the militia which was slow in recruiting, poorly trained and generally inefficient. He was also unpopular with the natives of New York state. Such factors must be considered in the study of why Putnam failed in this campaign.

Putnam's headquarters were at Peekskill on the east bank of the Hudson, north of Tarrytown. Just north of this were Fort Independence and Continental Village, where stores and men connected with the building of fortifications were collected. Across the river on the west side were Forts Clinton and Montgomery, just south of Bear Mountain and West Point. These were located on practically impregnable mountains, and it was considered by a committee of experts that they could only be attacked from the front. So difficult were the hills, it was believed to be impossible to make a rear attack, though this was what actually happened when the forts fell. Between the two strongholds was a small stream or clove which

was guarded by a force of soldiers.

While Putnam was ordered to get every possible bit of information about the enemy's movements on the Hudson, Washington was striving to prevent Howe from establishing communication between Philadelphia and the sea. This project was more important at that time than the capture of New York City, though Washington once favored a plan submitted by General McDougall for an attempt upon the city. As time went on, Washington demanded more and more troops, and he wished anything but a feint against New York to be given up. Putnam still hoped to keep enough men to make such an attack and his misunderstanding of the comparative importance of his own and the Commander's needs made for delay in sending on troops.

There were various projects afoot for the protection of the Hudson valley. One plan was to construct a boom across the river at St. Anthony's Nose to obstruct the British ships. Washington suggested a surprise attack on the British at Kingsbridge, but this never came about because the Commander-in-Chief ordered Putnam to forward all but a thousand of the Continental troops, which were on the west side of the river.

As has been stated, uncertainty of the enemy's position governed the campaign. When Howe's army departed from New Jersey, it was believed that he would attack the forts in the Highlands. At the same time, news of the fall of Ticonderoga came, though Putnam did not at the time believe it. Washington marched his troops into the Highlands to be at hand, when news came that all British, with the exception of seven thousand, left under Sir Henry Clinton to hold the city, had sailed

out of New York. Washington then ordered the troops under Sullivan and Stirling to go from Peekskill to Philadelphia. Putnam delayed and sent a letter which had been captured from the British, which suggested that the latter had sent their fleet to Boston and would return to the Hudson river. Washington recognized the deceit in this letter, and ordered the forwarding of further forces. The British fleet appeared off the Capes of Delaware only to disappear again, and Washington ordered the reinforcements back to the Highlands.

Putnam was using every power to control the situation, and at this time found a British spy, one Edmund Palmer, within the lines. He was tried and convicted, but Sir Henry Clinton sent a messenger, claiming that the American general had no authority to inflict the death penalty. Putnam's reply follows:

"Head-Quarters, 7 August,1777.

"Edmund Palmer, an officer in the enemy's service, was taken a spy lurking within our lines; he has been tried as a spy, condemned as a spy, and shall be executed as a spy, and the flag is ordered to depart immediately.

"Israel Putnam."

"P.S. He has been accordingly executed."[1]

In the fall of 1777, the militia was very anxious to get permission to return to their farms for the harvesting of the crops. Washington had written Putnam to keep as many as possible, for the

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.351 - original document owned by Frederick Lally, of Lansingburgh, N.Y.

armies under St. Leger and Burgoyne in the north were pressing forward. In August, however, Burgoyne was defeated by Stark at Bennington and St.Leger by General Herkimer at Fort Stanwix, so that the pressure from the north seemed to be relieved. At the same time, Howe was landing his troops on the shores of Chesapeake Bay. Putnam allowed some of his men to go home for the harvest. Then, Washington was defeated at Brandywine Creek and sent for reinforcements. Putnam tried to get troops from Connecticut, but there was delay in their arrival. Governor Clinton of New York state sent as many of the state militia as he could, but the situation was critical.

In Putnam's mind was a plan for an attempt upon New York city, with the hope of making attacks on Staten Island, Paulus Hook, York Island and Long Island. He had been promised more militia by Governor Trumbull of Connecticut and with the men from the outposts he hoped to be successful. This plan was prevented by a letter from Washington ordering more reinforcements to be sent.

Just after losing Philadelphia, Washington received the following letter from Putnam, announcing the loss of the forts in the Highlands:

"Fishkill, 6 o'clock, Wednesday
Morning,
8 October, 1777.

"Dear General, — It is with the utmost reluctance I now sit down to inform you that the enemy, after making a variety of movements up and down the North River, landed, on the morning of the 4th instant,

about three thousand men, at Tarrytown; and, after making an excursion about five miles up the country, they returned and embarked. The morning following they advanced up near King's Ferry, and landed on the east side of the river; but in the evening part of them re-embarked, and, the morning after, landed a little above King's Ferry, on the west side; but the morning, being so exceeding foggy, concealed their scheme, and prevented us from gaining any idea what number of troops they landed. In about three hours we discovered a large fire at the Ferry, which we imagined to be the store-houses, upon which it was thought they only landed with a view of destroying the said houses.

"The picket and scouts, which we had out, could not learn the exact number of the enemy that were remaining on the east side of the river; but, from the best accounts, they were about fifteen hundred. At this same time a number of ships, galleys, &c., with about forty flat-bottomed boats, made every appearance of their intentions to land troops, both at Fort Independence and Peekskill Landing.

"Under all these circumstances, my strength, being not more than twelve hundred Continental troops and three hundred militia, prevented me from detaching off a party to attack the enemy that lay on the east side of the river. After we had thought it impracticable to quit the heights, which we had then possession of, and attack the enemy, Brigadier-General Parsons and myself went to reconnoitre the ground near the enemy, and, on our return from thence,

we were alarmed with a very heavy and hot firing, both of small arms and cannon, at Fort Montgomery, which immediately convinced me that the enemy had landed a large body of men at the time and place before mentioned. Upon which, I immediately detached off five hundred men to re-enforce the garrison. But before they could possibly cross the river to their assistance, the enemy, who were far superior in numbers, had possessed themselves of the fort. Never did men behave with more spirit and alacrity than our troops upon this occasion. They repulsed the enemy three times, which were in number at least five to one. Governor Clinton and General James Clinton were both present; but the engagement continuing until the dusk of the evening, gave them both an opportunity, together with several officers and a number of privates, to make their escape. The loss of the enemy in this affair, Governor Clinton thinks must be very considerable. Our loss, killed and wounded, is by no means equal to what he might have expected. General James Clinton was wounded on the thigh, but I hope not mortally. Governor Clinton arrived at Peekskill the same evening, about eleven o'clock, and, with the advice of him, General Parsons, and several other officers, it was thought impossible to maintain the post at Peekskill with the force then present against one that the enemy might, in a few hours, bring on the heights in our rear. It was, therefore, agreed that the stores ought to be immediately removed to some secure place, and the troops take post at Fishkill until a re-enforcement of militia should come to their aid.

"I have repeatedly informed your Excellency of the enemy's design against this post; but, from some motive or other, you always

differed with me in opinion. As this conjecture of mine has, for once, proved right, I cannot omit informing you that my real and sincere opinion is, that they now mean to join General Burgoyne, with the utmost despatch. I have written General Gates, and informed him of the situation of our affairs in this quarter. Governor Clinton is exerting himself in collecting the militia of this state. Brigadier-General Parsons I have sent off to forward in the Connecticut militia, which are now arriving in great numbers. I therefore hope and trust that, in the course of a few days, I shall be able to oppose the progress of the enemy. Time will not permit me to add any thing more respecting the engagement, only that our loss (I believe, from the best information) does not exceed two hundred and fifty, killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. This evening I intend writing you again, but am now very busy. I am, dear General, with sincere regard,

"Your very obedient, humble servant,

"Israel Putnam."[1]

Following the capture and evacuation of the American forts, the British forced their way up the Hudson; they burned American shipping and many buildings on the shore. Coupled with this, Putnam had serious personal troubles, as his step-son, who had come to be his aide-de-camp, became sick and died. The sorrow from this, accompanied by the excitement of the surrender of the forts so worked upon Mrs. Putnam's mind that her health also failed. She died in the Highlands, thus adding personal loss to his military failures.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp.355-7, Also, Correspondence of the American Revolution, vol.I, p.438.

Again Putnam's favorite plan was unfulfilled. He marched his men up the east side of the Hudson, while Governor Clinton coöperated by leading his army up the west side, but they were unable to prevent the devastation of the country along the river. Putnam still had the project of attacking New York city in mind and suggested that this would draw the British forces back. He was advised against this by Governor Clinton and General Gates, but just then came the news of the surrender of Burgoyne, so that Putnam's hopes were again raised. Reinforcements, which had been released by Burgoyne's surrender, were received, but once more he was stopped by Washington's orders. General Dickinson from New Jersey might make a feint against New York, but Putnam was to forward reinforcements to Pennsylvania. Alexander Hamilton came to see that these men, long delayed, were sent on by Gates and Putnam. This young officer showed no tact in giving his orders to the older general, and he paused only to get a fresh horse for the trip to Albany to interview General Gates. W.F. Livingston, who held a favorable opinion of Putnam expressed himself in describing this occasion thus: "The military sins which Putnam forthwith committed, in neglecting to comply with the instructions to part with the reinforcements from the north, were not caused by jealousy — the feeling which Lee had shown towards Washington the year before, — or by the spirit of insubordination like that of Gates in the present campaign. ... He did not comprehend that Washington must have large reinforcements from the Northern Army to prevent Howe from removing the obstructions on the Delaware and opening a free communication between Philadelphia and the British shipping. Owing to his limited

vision, Putnam magnified the importance of the project against New York and failed to acknowledge the authority of Washington's representative, who, although a young man not yet twenty-one years old, had a clear perception of the military exigencies of the hour."[1] When Hamilton returned to Putnam, he was very angry to find that his orders had not been fulfilled, and gave further ones for the forwarding of troops. After an appeal to Washington, which resulted in the Commander-in-Chief's upholding of Hamilton, Putnam sent on the troops. Dawson claimed that the continued occupation of Philadelphia by the British was due to this delay.

Sundry minor activities took place in the Highlands. Putnam temporarily put a stop to British plundering parties by burning the home of a noted Tory, one General Oliver Delancy, who lived on York Island. The owner was captured but was soon exchanged. An attempt was made by General Dickinson to surprise General Skinner, a Tory stationed at Halstead's Point, but the enterprise succeeded only in the capture of twenty-four prisoners, as the enemy had been warned.

A plan for destroying lumber, shipping and stores and for attacking a British regiment on Long Island was drawn up by Putnam. In carrying it out, Colonel Webb and his party were captured by the British sloop Falcon, while Colonel Meigs was prevented from crossing the Sound by the weather conditions. However, General Parsons destroyed some lumber and Captain Hart successfully attacked a small party of British. On the whole, the affair was not very important.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.362 - Hamilton's statements taken from Works of Alexander Hamilton, ed. by J.C. Hamilton, v.1

The last important duty of Putnam in the Highlands was his work in connection with the choice of West Point as a fort. Following the British evacuation of the forts, the question arose as to whether the old ones should be rebuilt or a new location should be chosen. Putnam as well as Governor Clinton and General James Clinton favored West Point, opposite Fort Constitution. However, a French engineer, Radière, opposed this and preferred Fort Clinton, perhaps because Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander, had begun to repair it. Consequently, a committee chosen by the Council and Assembly of New York state was requested to decide, and they chose West Point. By January, ground was broken for the fort and work proceeded upon the booms, chains and chevaux-de-frise, which were to be sunk to impede shipping. During this same winter, Washington held his desperate little army at Valley Forge. Conditions in the Highlands were similar. Putnam wrote to Washington: "Dubois's regiment is unfit to be ordered on duty, there being not one blanket in the regiment. Very few have either a shoe or a shirt, and most of them have neither stockings, breeches, nor overalls. Several companies of enlisted artificers are in the same situation, and unable to work in the field."[1]

In February, Putnam went to Connecticut to arrange his own affairs and to return to the Court of Inquiry regarding the loss of Forts Clinton and Montgomery. Washington had lost confidence in Putnam's ability to hold the command of the Highlands, partly because of his neglect of orders and loss of the important forts and partly because of complaints of citizens of New York state. Naturally these people were

1-Cutter, William, The Life of Gen. Putnam, p.344.

indignant because their property had been destroyed by the enemy, and they wished to lay the blame on someone. They claimed that Putnam had been lax in granting passes to Loyalists who wished to go through the American lines to New York city, and that he had been indulgent to Tories whom he found in this region. It was even charged that he personally profited from the plunder of war which rightfully belonged to the government.

In a letter to Washington, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston wrote, "Your Excellency is not ignorant of the extent of General Putnam's capacity and diligence; and how well so ever these may qualify him for this most important command, the prejudices to which his imprudent lenity to the disaffected and too great intercourse with the enemy, have given rise, have greatly injured his influence."[1] In Washington's reply to Livingston was the following: "It has not been an easy matter to find a just pretence for removing an officer from his command where his misconduct rather appears to result from want of capacity than from any real intention of doing wrong, and it is therefore as you observe to be lamented that he cannot see his own defects and make an honorable retreat from a Station in which he only exposed his own weakness. Proper measures are taking to carry on the enquiry into the loss of Fort Montgomery agreeable to the direction of Congress, and it is more than probable, from what I have heard, that the issue of that enquiry will afford just grounds for a removal of Genl. P(utnam) but whether it does or not, the prejudices of all

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp.372-3. - Thomas Egleston, Life of Major-General John Paterson.

ranks in that quarter against him are so great, that he must at all events be prevented from returning."[1] On February 21, 1777, John Adams wrote from Baltimore to his wife: "... Schuyler, Putnam, Spencer, Heath are thought by very few to be capable of the great commands they hold. We hear of none of their heroic deeds of arms. I wish they would all resign."[2]

In his letter to Putnam informing him of the court of inquiry which Congress had ordered, Washington said, "My reason for making this change is owing to the prejudices of the people, which whether well or ill grounded, must be indulged; and I should think myself wanting in justice to the public, and candor towards you, were I to continue you in a command, after I have been in almost direct terms informed, that the people of the State of New York will not render the necessary support and assistance, while you remain at the head of that department."[3]

The officer who replaced Putnam was Major-General Alexander McDougall, who named the fort at West Point Fort Putnam, after Colonel Rufus Putnam who assisted Kosciusko as engineer.

Brigadier-General Huntington and Colonel Wigglesworth were appointed to assist General McDougall in the investigation which began in March, 1778. "The decision, approved by the Continental Congress, was that the forts were lost "Not from any fault, misconduct, or negligence of the commanding officers, but solely through the want

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp. 372-3.

2-Burnett, E.C., ed., Letters of mebers of the Continental Congress, pp. 269

3-Cutter, W., Life of Gen. Putnam, p. 333

of adequate force under their command to maintain and defend them.'"[1]

Immediately after the investigation was over, Putnam returned to Connecticut to have charge of the recruiting service there.

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, - The Journals of Congress, 1778.

Chapter X

The Last Years

During April, May and a part of June, 1778, Putnam was kept busy recruiting the men of Connecticut, under the order of Governor Trumbull. He was somewhat hampered because people felt that the news of the French alliance meant a speedy and easy peace, so they did not care to exert themselves further, but he succeeded in raising the required numbers and then he appealed to Washington for more active service.

In a letter to Gouverneur Morris, Washington expressed his doubt as to what to do with Putnam, for he held high rank, and must either command Gates or serve under a junior officer.[1] Temporarily he was placed in command of the troops formerly under Lee, who was removed for misconduct at the battle of Monmouth. Livingston comments, "Congress had at last accepted the report of the Court of Inquiry and restored him to his old standing in the army."[2] Putnam joined Washington at White Plains and was ordered across the river for the protection of West Point. Dr. James Thacher, an American surgeon, wrote his impression of Putnam at this time, "In his person he is corpulent and clumsy, but carries a bold, undaunted front. He exhibits little of the refinements of the well-educated gentleman, but much of the character of the veteran soldier. He appears to be advanced to the age of about sixty years, and it is famed of him that he has, in many instances, proved himself as brave as Caesar."[3]

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.378, Washington's Correspondence

2-Ibid, p.389.

3-Ibid, p.380 - Military Journal, Sept. 8, 1778 of Dr. James Thacher

Because of the prejudice in New York state against Putnam, Washington was careful to transfer Putnam back to Connecticut for winter quarters.

Putnam's headquarters were established at Umpawaug Hill, in the present town of Redding - then Danbury, which is in the valley of the Saugatuck river. Here David Humphreys, who had been aide to both Greene and Washington, joined him as an aide-de-camp. He was to become the first biographer of Putnam, writing his book — said to be the first biography to be published in America — at Mt. Vernon, while a guest of the former Commander-in-Chief. Since Humphreys was a close friend of Washington as well as an admirer or Putnam, it would be of great interest to know if Washington shared the sentiments of the biographer. Joel Barlow, one of the Hartford wits, was a visitor at the Redding camp and in his "Columbiad" wrote,

"Putnam, scored with ancient scars,
The living records of his country's wars."[1]

Putnam was called upon to settle an attempted insurrection in the army at Redding. The soldiers complained of the want of clothes and proper pay; finally Huntington's brigade determined to march to Hartford to threaten the Legislature. Putnam rode up and down the lines and made an impressive speech which Humphreys has preserved for us,[2] "My brave lads whither are you going? Do you intend to desert your officers and to invite the enemy to follow you into the country? Whose cause have you been fighting and

2-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p. 385, Humphreys, David, Life of Putnam.

1-Ibid, p.384, Joel Barlow's Columbiad.

suffering so long in — is it not your own? Have you no property, no parents, wives, or children? You have behaved like men so far — all the world is full of your praises — and posterity will stand astonished at your deeds, but not if you spoil all at last. Don't you consider how much the country is distressed by the war, and that your officers have not been any better paid than yourselves? But we all expect better times, and that the country will do us ample justice. Let us all stand by one another, then, and fight it out like brave soldiers. Think what a shame it would be for Connecticut men to run away from their officers."[1]

Putnam succeeded in marching the men back to quarters and having them lodge their arms. Only one leader was put under guard, and when he attempted to escape, the sentinel, who had been in the mutiny, shot him dead. Washington complimented Putnam upon his handling of the situation.

Two deserters who went to the enemy as spies, Edward Jones and John Smith, were caught and hanged on what became known as Gallows Hill.

Small expeditions of British were sent out to plunder the Connecticut coast, and Putnam dispatched soldiers from the Redding camp to meet them. A party of British under Tryon had been ordered to destroy the salt works at Horseneck in Greenwich, as these were quite valuable to the patriots. Putnam was surprised and almost caught by this raiding party, but he managed to join his men in

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.385, Humphreys, David, Life of Putnam.

front of the Congregational church, which stood on a hill. While there were only one hundred and fifty Americans, there were many more British. After a brief stand in which some field pieces and muskets were discharged, Putnam ordered his troops to retreat to a hill nearer Horseneck, while he went to Stamford to get the militia and Continental troops stationed there. Putnam was pursued by some of the British who were so near to catching him that he had to turn his horse down a steep bank to escape. The British failed to bring him down with pistols, though one shot is said to have gone through his hat. The well-trained horse managed to slide down the steep bank and carried his rider to Stamford, where reinforcements were secured. Upon returning to Horseneck, Putnam found the enemy had gone, but not before destroying the salt works, a sloop and store, and pillaging dwelling houses. In recognition of the good treatment given prisoners, Putnam received a new suit of clothes from Governor Tryon; this must have compensated for the injury the British bullet did his hat.

A good many traditions have grown up about this minor incident of Putnam's Horseneck ride. The stories do not agree as to where Putnam was when supprised by the British. One authority has it that he was shaving at the house of General Ebenezer Mead, and that he saw in the mirror a reflection of the approaching enemy. This account states that he mounted his horse in such a hurry that he had not washed away the lather. In another story, he was supposed to have been at the house of Captain John Hobby; the enemy saw him as he dashed away on horseback to join his troops. A third

story has it that he was at Israel Knapp's tavern. Likewise, the stories vary as to how difficult his escape from the pursuing British might have been. Some accounts describe him as dashing down a "precipice", while his pursuers were but two lengths behind. Another tradition tells of how he went down an "irregular rocky stair-way", while still another description calls this descent a "cow-path" and claims that he was two-thirds down the hill before he reached the stone steps. A boulder marks the hill, and many memorial exercises have been held to commemorate the ride.

On May 27th, Putnam departed to take command of the right wing of the army in the Highlands. While his new command was on the west side of the Hudson, the troops which he had commanded during the winter were assigned to Major-General Heath for service on the east side of the Hudson. Putnam had charge of the main body of troops at Smith's Clove, and McDougall was in command of West Point. Soon, the British captured Stony Point and Fort Lafayette, and they were planning to take West Point. An attempt to divert the Americans' attention was made by attacks upon the Connecticut coast, but Washington's answer to this was to send Anthony Wayne to capture Stony Point, where Washington established his headquarters. They succeeded in taking back Stony Point and Verplanck's Point. The situation remained thus until the British withdrew, just before Sir Henry Clinton departed from New York for Charlestown, S.C.

Putnam, who had been at Buttermilk Falls, two miles south of West Point, was given leave to go home for a visit. After a short stay, he started back for winter quarters at Morristown, N.J.,

accompanied by his son, Daniel, and by his future biographer and aide-de-camp, Humphreys. Somewhere on the road between Pomfret and Hartford, Putnam was seized by a form of paralysis which affected his entire right side. He attempted to cure this by exercise, but he was obliged to seek rest at the home of a friend, Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, at Hartford. It was found necessary for him to return home, where he lived with the family of his oldest son. He could walk a little and ride on horseback, but he was never able to return to the army for active service, though he did visit camp.

From December 1779 when the paralysis came until his death on May 29, 1790, Putnam spent most of his time at home. He entertained many visitors with anecdotes of his experiences in the wars: it is said that his favorite story was about a duel with a British officer. The latter had been insulted by one of Putnam's remarks and demanded redress, supposing that it would take the form of a duel with swords or pistols. Before the officer could take his proper position, Putnam began to fire at him. Surprised at this breach of form, he inquired as to the other's purpose: "What am I doing? A pretty question to ask a man whom you intended to murder! I am going to kill you, and if you don't beat retreat in less time than it would take old Heath to hang a Tory, you are a gone dog!"[1]

On another occasion, when challenged to a duel, the agreement was that Putnam should provide the weapons. The officer found him seated upon a powder barrel. Putnam invited his challenger

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, p.406 - taken from family annals.

to share his seat, and then calmly lighted a match in a small opening in the top of the barrel. The officer jumped back, expecting an explosion, only to be told by Putnam: "You are just as brave a man as I thought". The barrel was filled with vegetables, except for a thin layer of powder at the top.

There are a number of incidents told of this period. Putnam wrote to the Windham County Court to urge that body to forbid the licensing of another tavern in Brooklyn as his experience showed that too many public houses made for ruining the morals of the youth. In 1786, he rode horseback to Danvers, his birthplace, accompanied by the colored servant, Dick, whom he had acquired in Cuba. His last days were spent in the house of his youngest son, Peter Schuyler Putnam. This large old house is still standing, not a great distance from the celebrated wolf den. He continued to get out to the services at the Congregational church, which is still standing on Brooklyn Green. An inflammatory disease which lasted only two or three days caused his death on May 27, 1790.

The funeral was held at the church which he had helped to build and for whose services he had rung the bell. The Independent Chronicle and Advertiser of June 10, 1790 contained an account of the services:

"Brooklyn, Conn., June 3, 1790. — Saturday last died here, after a short illness, in the 73d year of his age, that celebrated hero, patriot, and philanthrophist, Israel Putnam, Esq., Major-General in the late Continental army. He enjoyed his reason to the

last moments of his life, and with remarkable cheerfulness and solid satisfaction, left this for the everlasting rewards of a better and more glorious country, and on Tuesday his funeral was attended by the largest and most respectable collection of the inhabitants ever known here on a like occasion. After a well adapted sermon was delivered by Rev. Josiah Whitney, the procession moved to the burying ground in the following order: Company of Grenadiers, Militia of the Town with reversed arms, Music, Company of Artillery, Free Masons in the badges of their order, Bearers, the corpse, Bearers, Mourners, the Clergy, the Church of Brooklyn, Military Officers, Inhabitants.

"When the procession had arrived at the burying ground, the troops opening to the right and left, the Masons passed on to the grave, and after performing their accustomed ancient ceremonies and pronouncing a short eulogium on the character of the deceased, the Grenadiers advanced and three platoons fired, which was succeeded by a discharge from the artillery. The whole was concluded with that order and decorum which the love and respect of the inhabitants inspired."[1]

The extremely laudatory funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Whitney, Putnam's friend, and the eulogium at the cemetery was given by Dr. Albigence Waldo. Rev. Timothy Dwight, later president of Yale College, wrote the epitaph for the original slab which stood over the grave. This is now preserved in the state capitol

1-Livingston, W.F., Israel Putnam, pp. 411-412 - Independence Chronicle and Universal Advertisar of June 10, 1790.

at Hartford and reads as follows: "To the memory of Israel Putnam, Esquire, Senior Major General in the Armies of the United States of America who was born at Salem in the Province of Massachusetts on the seventh day of January, A.D. 1718 and died on the twenty-ninth day of May, A.D. 1790: Passenger, if thou art a soldier, drop a tear over the dust of a hero who ever attentive to the lives and happiness of his men dared to lead where any dared to follow; if a patriot, remember the distinguished and gallant services rendered thy country by the patriot who sleeps beneath this monument; if thou art honest, generous and worthy render a cheerful tribute of respect to a man whose generosity was singular, whose honesty was proverbial, who raised himself to universal esteem and offices of eminent distinction by personal worth and a useful life."

The original inventory of Israel Putnam's estate, dated June, 1790, is preserved in the probate records of Connecticut at Hartford and shows a total of 1,450 pounds in money, besides various pieces of land which were given to his children.

A visit to the village of Brooklyn gives one the setting of Putnam's home life. Dominating the green is the white, colonial church, the same building which Putnam attended and from which he was buried. Across the street is the yard where the General Wolfe Tavern stood and the field from which Putnam hurried to Boston after the news of Concord reached him. Down the street, stands the large equestrian statue of Putnam, almost in the yard of the Mortlake Manor Inn, now the property of Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, once owned by her ancestors, the Tylers, who intermarried with Putnam's family. The statue shows the short figure of Putnam mounted on horseback, and on its base is carved a symbolic wolf's head. The remains of Putnam

The House where Putnam Died

The Brooklyn Monument and

Mortlake Manor Inn

are enclosed in this granite monument. The state of Connecticut appropriated the sum of ten thousand dollars to construct a memorial over the remains of Putnam in Brooklyn, but the cemetery plot proved too small for such an elaborate project. In order to keep within the law, the remains were moved to this spot. Some little argument took place among members of the Committee as to a suitable spot for such a memorial. While a spot on the Green was thought to be better, this was owned by a church organization which refused the privilege. The legislature of Connecticut was fully persuaded of the greatness of Putnam and only quarreled over the location of the memorial.

A boulder in the famous field where Putnam left his plough in the furrow to hurry to Massachusetts bears the following inscription:

"In the field behind this stone after the close of the French and Indian Wars, returning from many expeditions to Ticonderoga, Fort Edward, Quebec, Montreal, Havana, Detroit, and New Orleans lived Col. Israel Putnam. Here with his wife (2nd) Mrs. Deborah (Avery Gardiner) Putnam he dispensed a famous hospitality at the General Wolfe Tavern. Near this spot also, April 21, 1775, Putnam received news of the battle of Lexington, left his plow in the furrow with his son Daniel, rode one hundred miles in 18 hours, reaching Cambridge the next day. There soon after he planned and on June 17,1775, commanded at the battle of Bunker Hill, receiving thereafter from the Continental Congress by the hand of Washington the first commission of major general (and the only one

unanimously voted) which made him second in rate to his chief."

The historian might disagree with at least two of these statements -- that concerning his commanding at Bunker Hill and concerning his being second to Washington, for he was really only fourth Major-General.

Summary

Israel Putnam's military career extended over two major wars — the French and Indian and the Revolutionary — besides the less important Bradstreet's Expedition against Pontiac. During these struggles, he had the experience of wide travel; he became well acquainted with the Lake Champlain region in the campaigns against Fort Ticonderoga; he had marched across New York state to Lake Erie, and he travelled on the Great Lakes and down the St. Lawrence river to Montreal. Furthermore, he had gone to Cuba and later, in the interests of the veterans of the French and Indian War, up the Mississippi river. His Revolutionary duties took him to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and up the Hudson into the Highlands. He was present at the fall of Fort Ticonderoga, under Lord Amherst, but he missed the fall of Montreal because he was left to guard the boats. In the battles of Bunker Hill, Long Island, Harlem Heights, and White Plains he had a part. As a respected citizen, he must have influenced many to give active support to the American Revolution. Thus, through his activities in peace times and his thirteen years of military service, he deserves some consideration as a builder of the American Republic.

Of what importance were Putnam's activities in the wars? During the French and Indian War, he was advanced from being a private to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, given him by the Connecticut General Assembly. He was at no time a leader in a major engagement, but his work consisted in scouting, supervising the building of roads and forts, and in leading minor skirmishes against the enemy. He was rewarded by the Connecticut General Assembly by a gift of fifty dollars for extraordinary service, and he gained a reputation for

courage and ingenuity. This experience and prestige made possible his position in the Revolutionary struggle.

In the days preliminary to the struggle for independence, Putnam encouraged the use of force against the mother country, and he was influential in raising the spirits of his countrymen to the fighting point. He was chosen to take Brooklyn's contribution of sheep to the relief of Boston. On hearing the news of Lexington and Concord, he left immediately for Massachusetts. In Cambridge, his experience gave him a leading position. The affair on Hogg and Noddle's islands, in which Putnam arrived to support the troops sent to drive the animals off these islands in Boston harbor, was especially valuable, for the glory fell to him and helped to cause his appointment as Major-General in the Continental army.

At the battle of Bunker Hill, Putnam was anxious to erect fortifications upon Bunker Hill to reinforce those on Breed's Hill, and he took men needed on the latter hill in the hope of carrying out this project. Accounts vary as to his position in the battle. His admirers maintained that he took a most active part at the rail fence and in leading forward recruits across Charlestown Neck between the British assaults, while other accounts maintain that he was at no time on the fighting line, but was safely behind the shelter of Bunker Hill.

After the arrival of Washington in Cambridge, Putnam was assigned to the command of a division of the American army and was given his commission from Congress. When the British evacuated Boston, Washington sent Putnam to New York city to command the fortification

of that place for the brief period before the Commander-in-Chief could come himself. Putnam had charge of a fleet of small boats which were to be used in an effort to prevent the British fleet from sailing up the Hudson river. In connection with his efforts, came the unsuccessful experiment with the first submarine, the American Turtle.

Two days before the battle of Long Island, Putnam was placed in command at Brooklyn Heights because of the illness of General Greene. However, he was closely supervised by Washington, who had gone over the defenses of the passes leading to the works the day before the battle. Because the Jamaica Pass had been neglected, the British had no difficulty in making a flanking movement, which almost cut off General Sullivan from Putnam. The British made it imperative for the Americans to evacuate Brooklyn Heights and later, New York city.

Putnam was one of the officers who led the men in the battle of Harlem Heights which served to give back some confidence in their discouraged condition. Putnam was not in time to help materially in the battle of White Plains. He was sent to Philadelphia to prepare the defenses of that town, and because of the danger of a Loyalist uprising, he failed to aid Washington at the battle of Trenton.

While in command of the Highlands, Putnam misinterpreted the movements of the British troops and as a result they stormed and captured Fort Montgomery. Putnam then became so unpopular with the people of New York state that, in spite of the favorable verdict of

of the court martial, which investigated his conduct, he had to be removed from duty in that state. He was sent to do recruiting work in Connecticut and to command the winter headquarters at Redding, Connecticut. During this winter occurred the celebrated ride at Horseneck in Greenwich. He later held a command on the Hudson for a brief time, but he was soon removed from service by a paralytic stroke.

What proof is there of Putnam's courage? Year after year he re-enlisted in the French and Indian Wars, though there was undoubtedly risk in his scouting activities. He was undaunted by shipwreck and fever in the campaign against Cuba. When the West was upset by Pontiac's Conspiracy, Putnam volunteered to serve in the Bradstreet expedition, where his life was in danger from Indians and from drowning in the Great Lakes. One's presence in Charlestown on the day of the battle would have caused some personal risk, and reputable authorities claimed that Putnam was in the thick of the fighting at the rail fence. There was also danger in the retreat from New York at Kip's Bay, Harlem Heights, and White Plains, not to mention the struggle on Long Island. Putnam was always eager to be in the thick of things and was discontented when left out. He apparently used his energy and time to the utmost of his ability.

What are the charges which may be fairly brought against Putnam? His achievements in the French and Indian Wars have been exaggerated by writers bent on giving Putnam a wholly heroic appearance, for he was not an outstanding officer in this struggle, in the sense that he planned any brilliant campaigns or had charge of carrying them out.

His services were much more humble though none the less necessary and arduous. After all, many a soldier must have gone through the same lonely marches, petty battles and exposure in the forest and on the water, but not all of them were able to show enough leadership to be made second in a regiment.

Putnam missed his opportunity on several crucial occasions to have executed something really great — once at Bunker Hill, again in the battle of Long Island and lastly in the Highlands. Of course, he had ill-trained troops and doubt as to the plans of the enemy, but the enemy was always able to surprise and out-general him. His withdrawing of troops needed on Breed's Hill for building works on Bunker Hill, when a battle was imminent, seems the height of folly. Every effort should have been concentrated on the redoubt and the rail fence. At Long Island, another man would have taken more pains with the Jamaica Pass to have prevented the surprise flanking movement. In the Highlands, Putnam might have recognized the supreme importance of the forts and have kept together the militia, some of whom he had allowed to go home; but he failed to concentrate every effort on these forts and was out of reach at the crucial moment. He should have been more prompt in obeying the Commander-in-Chief in sending troops when ordered by Hamilton.

Dawson and Dearborn, the most bitter critics of Putnam, insinuate more serious charges against Putnam. Instead of confusion and futility in commanding the troops at Bunker Hill, they would have it that Putnam was a sneaking coward, hiding behind Bunker Hill with Gerrish, and never in the front line, as Swett states.

They assert that ever after Bunker Hill, Washington attempted to keep Putnam in as quiet a section as possible. The battle of Long Island with all its resulting discouragement, loss of morale and the evacuation of New York city was due to Putnam's negligence and his withdrawing of troops that were assigned to guard the passes. They charged that Putnam was lenient with the enemy to the point of treason. They hinted that, if the opportunity had been given, Putnam would have been another Benedict Arnold in betraying the forts on the Hudson.

In view of the favorable stand taken by Frothingham, Fisk, Bancroft, Channing, as well as the many other historians, it seems that a middle course may be taken. Putnam certainly had the faults of lack of education, military training, failure to perceive the relative importance of affairs, but he doesn't appear to the writer to have been by any means a traitor to his country. The weight of the evidence would indicate that his mistakes arose from incapacity rather than criminal intentions or cowardice. There always remains the fact that one hundred and fifty-five years have passed since the battle of Bunker Hill, and it is impossible to know all the motives that may have prompted Washington in keeping Putnam in fairly important positions, nor will it ever be possible to know all the truth of the position of Putnam in the battle of Bunker Hill, so absolutely contradictory were reports of eye-witnesses and so motivated were these by political considerations in giving testimony.

To the writer, Putnam appears as a hearty, talkative and adventure-loving man, who through a fortunate series of events, combined with the ability to make friends, acquired a rank too high for his training and ability.

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